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ABSTRACT

This study examined college students' perceptions on interactions across racial and cultural differences at a major research university in the United States. Approximately 30 freshman students from various groups volunteered to participate in a year-long program intended to encourage students to become cross-cultural mentors and allies for each other. Participants completed a questionnaire and an in-depth interview during the program. Participant-observation audio recordings and a focus group session with three participants were also conducted. Extensive excerpts from the focus group discussions indicated that all three students demonstrated their cognizance of the role identity plays in interpersonal interactions. Their own descriptions of how they were both blind to and conscious of identity in their interactions illustrated the notion that these students may not have a singular perception of identity in all of their interactions. Although these students did not deny the existence of racism or even deny their own personal prejudices, neither did they acknowledge the ways in which issues of power might impact their interactions across difference. Appendixes provide copies of the student questionnaires, interview questions, and focus group questions. (Contains 22 references.) (MDM)

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON INTERACTIONS ACROSS DIFFERENCE

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Notes

The names of all persons referred to in this study are pseudonyms given to protect anonymity. In addition, the program name "Explorations" is also a pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of the program director and participants. The names of all university groups and organizations mentioned in the study were also changed.

In addition brackets { } were used in quotations throughout this paper to indicate when a word or phrase was altered in order to protect anonymity.

College Students' Perspectives on Interactions Across Difference

Review of the Literature

Background

As student populations on college campuses become increasingly diverse (Bunzel, 1992; Duster, 1993), universities face the challenge of creating campus communities for students from many diverse backgrounds (Tatum, 1992). Recently, both on college campuses and in larger society, there has been a rise in pluralism as a social ideal which stresses valuing difference of identity rather than ignoring or rejecting difference (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Paley, 1979/1989; Tatum, 1992). Previously, educators and others have used the concept of "color blindness" to characterize a person who professes to interact with others supposedly without considering the other's race and who professes the ideal of avoiding discrimination based on race. Within the context of today's multicultural society, there is a need to depart from this narrow notion of color blindness. The concept of color blindness has become inadequate because a variety of identities in addition to color and race are salient in interpersonal relations among diverse people. This review draws on seminal works of theory and research in education and in (social) psychology relevant to a study exploring college students' perceptions of interactions across difference on college campuses in the United States.

Recent work on cross-group interactions has supported the notion that color blindness is not an effective response to cultural diversity (Burbles and Rice, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Schofield, 1995). Cochran-Smith (1995) drew on what she learned about cultural assumptions in her work with the inquiries of student teachers in urban elementary schools to warn educators not to "mistake color blindness for educational equity" (p. 494). Her experiences directing Project START (Student Teachers as Researching Teachers), a program for fifth-year students pursuing a master's in elementary education, led her to call for an alternative to color blindness as a response to cultural diversity. Instead, she urged educators to reconsider their assumptions about the values and practices of culturally diverse students, parents, and teachers

In reflecting on her own teaching in light of Vivian Paley's book *White Teacher*, Delpit (1991) proposed that acknowledging difference is a crucial step in learning to value differences. She also argued that we need to consider the varied identities that might affect communication within a particular encounter (Delpit, 1988). Failing to recognize the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions does not some how magically erase differences among people. Rather, it masks the value and significance of each individual's multiple identities.

Awareness of difference need not be a barrier to intersubjective understanding (Burbles and Rice, 1991) . In questioning whether dialogue across difference is possible and worthwhile, Burbles and Rice (1991) argued that dialogue and interaction which acknowledge difference can facilitate toleration, respect, and understanding. Specifically, they outlined three possible benefits deriving from dialogue across difference -- developing a more flexible construction of identity by recognizing one's self as a member of various subcommunities; broadening our understanding of both ourselves and others; fostering more reasonable and sustainable communicative practices. Dialogue across difference may not always be possible or beneficial, but it is still worth pursuing (Burbles and Rice, 1991). Burbles and Rice (1991) also suggested that educational contexts, such as university campuses, are potential forums for pursuing dialogue across difference.

In reviewing research and theory related to improving intergroup relations among students, Schofield (1995) discussed what she terms the "color blind perspective," the perspective that "sees racial and ethnic group membership as irrelevant to the way individuals are treated" (p. 642). She noted that this perspective appeals to the American ideal of emphasis on the individual and is widely used in American institutions, including schools. However, there are two major negative effects of practicing a colorblind perspective, according to Schofield. First, practices ignoring group membership may lead

to the overlooking of policies that are disadvantageous to minority groups. In addition, policies resulting in or tolerating resegregation (integrated situations in which people from varied groups have little meaningful intergroup contact) may result from a colorblind perspective (Schofield, 1995). She thus warned educators not to adopt a colorblind perspective.

Models for Intergroup Relations

Allport's (1954) classical social-psychological model of intergroup contact focused on situational factors theorized to improve intergroup relations. He examined the nature of prejudice and studied potential models for reducing prejudice. Prejudice is defined by Allport as:

> an avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group. (Allport, 1954, p. 7)

Allport asserted that contact alone does not lead to a reduction in prejudice or an increase in cross-cultural understanding. However, the potential for positive intergroup contact can be improved when the following criteria are met in the context of cross-cultural interactions: equal status, cooperation, understanding, and support from those in positions of authority (Allport, 1954, p. 281). Equal status refers to structuring a situation so that all members of all groups are given equal status. A cooperative situation fosters cooperation and pursuit of common goals rather than competition and also encourages people to learn about and develop an understanding of each other's similarities and differences. Finally, the support of cooperative, equal status interactions by those in positions of authority is vital to improving intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). In his discussion of programs designed to foster positive intergroup contact, Allport (1954) pointed out that is wasteful to invest resources in programs for the improvement of intergroup relations if those programs are not grounded in sound theory.

Stephan and Stephan (1985) extended Allport's contact theory. They proposed a model incorporating the antecedents and consequences of intergroup anxiety and used a regression analysis to test the model (Stephan and Stephan, 1985). Their study tested and supported the hypothesis that intergroup anxiety, anxiety caused by interactions or contacts with members of another socially defined group (e.g., interactions between members of different racial or ethnic groups), is brought about by three sets of factors: "(1) prior intergroup relations (e.g., the amount and conditions of prior contact); (2) prior intergroup cognitions (e.g., knowledge of the outgroup, stereotypes, prejudice, expectations, and perceptions of dissimilarity); (3) situational factors (e.g., amount of structure, type of interdependence, group composition, and relative status)" (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, p. 158). According to these factors, students lacking prior contact with and knowledge of those from different socially defined groups are likely to experience intergroup anxiety (Stephan and Stephan, 1982).

Situational factors found by Stephan and Stephan to reduce anxiety in intergroup interactions include: amount of structure, type of interdependence, group composition, and relative status (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, p. 164). Structured situations tend to decrease anxiety and lower ambiguity through providing guidelines for behavior. Cooperative interdependence lowers anxiety when compared to situations characterized by competition or lack of interdependence. It is ideal to structure group composition so that the ratios of members of different groups are fairly equal. In addition, deviations from equal status among those interacting in a group tend to increase anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985) . A university certainly cannot control the structure of all group situations (composition of residence halls, classes, student organizations, etc.) in a campus community. However, certain situations and activities can be purposefully structured to reduce intergroup anxiety and to provide models for positive intergroup interactions.

Racial Identity Theories

A number of models for fostering dialogue and interactions across difference (e.g., Bennett, 1986; Gay, 1984; Katz, 1976; Tatum, 1992) incorporate racial identity theory. Many theories of racial identity have been developed, but two theories in particular have been seminal foundations for recent frameworks designed to foster cross-cultural sensitivity -- William Cross' 1971 theory of Black identity development and Janet Helms's 1990 theory of White racial identity development. Although the emphasis on Black and White identity development needs to be expanded to include identity development for a variety of groups, these two theories are significant due to the frequency with which they are cited (Tatum, 1992).

It is first important to understand how these theories define racial identity. Helms (1990) differentiated between race/racial categorization and racial identity. She employed Casas's (1984) use of Krogman's (1945) definition of race: "'a sub-group of peoples possessing a definite combination of physical characters, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind [sic] (p. 49),' (p. 787)" (Helms, 1992, p. 3). She then defined racial identity as:

> a sense of group or collective identity based on one's *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular group. . .what people believe, feel, and about distinguishable racial groups can have. . . implications for individuals' intrapersonal as well as interpersonal functioning. Racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership; that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership.
> (Helms, 1992, pp. 3-4)

Racial identity theories are concerned with the ways in which a person identifies or does not identify with their racial group. A person's racial consciousness refers to one's awareness of that racial group membership and to how socialization due to this group membership influences one's intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning (Helms, 1992).

Cross's (1971) model of Black identity development includes five stages: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, Internalization-Commitment (see Cross, 1971, for a complete description of these stages). His stages of identity development begin with the Preencounter stage in which a Black individual identifies with many aspects of White culture and rejects membership in Black culture. Identity development progresses to the final stage, internalization commitment, which is characterized by a positive sense of racial identity and a commitment to fighting the oppression of Black people (Cross, 1971).

Helms (1990) proposed six stages in her model of White racial identity development: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion/Emersion, Autonomy (see Helms, 1990, for a complete description of these stages). The stages progress from a lack of awareness of one's own racial identity and of both personal and institutional racism in the Contact Stage to development of a positive, non-racist multicultural identity in the Autonomy Stage (Helms, 1990). Ultimately, Helms (1990) suggested that an understanding of racial identity development theories provides a framework for interventions that can promote healthy identity development. Thus, an understanding of identity development theory is indeed relevant to the current study of students involved in a program designed to foster exploration of both other's identities and their own multiple identities.

Empirical Studies of College Students' Interactions Across Difference

College students may not voluntarily pursue learning about diversity issues, and as they encounter the challenges of living amidst a diverse student body, they may not be able to effectively process their emotional responses to diversity issues (Tatum, 1992). Tatum

(1992) found that student understanding is advanced when both the intellectual and emotional aspects of oppression-related content are acknowledged (Tatum, 1992). Tatum, a clinical psychologist, taught a course in the Psychology of Racism for more than a decade and applied racial identity development theory in her classes. Her study involved reflections on her experiences teaching and thematic analyses of essays and journals written her courses. She used Cross's (1971) and Helms's (1990) models of racial identity development in her interventions to help students understand their emotional reactions to issues of oppression.

The increased diversity of students on college campuses in the United States has prompted many institutions to pay closer attention to multicultural issues. Colleges and universities have been bringing issues of identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and class, into the academic discourse through attempts to make the curriculum more multicultural (Tatum, 1992). However, too often the introduction of what Tatum (1992) calls "issues of oppression" (racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, etc.) fails to acknowledge or address the emotional responses consideration of such issues tends to evoke: "The introduction of these issues of oppression often generates powerful emotional responses in students that range from guilt and shame to anger and despair. If not addressed, these emotional issues can result in student resistance to oppression-related content areas," (Tatum, 1992, p. 2). It is not enough then, make the academic discourse more multicultural if the related emotional reactions are not addressed.

Tatum (1992) observed that most of the students in her course experience anxiety and resistance when learning about issues of oppression. In particular, she (1992) identified three major sources of resistance to learning about and discussing race and racism:

> 1.) Race is considered a taboo topic for discussion, especially in racially mixed settings.
> 2.) Many students, regardless of racial-group membership, have been socialized to think of the United States as a just society.
> 3.) Many students, particularly White students, initially deny any personal prejudice, recognizing the impact of racism on other people's lives, but failing to acknowledge its impact in their own. (Tatum, 1992, p. 5)

Similar sources of resistance may well surround other oppression-related issues (sexism, homophobia, classism, etc.) beyond racism. Tatum (1992) facilitated discussion and exploration of oppression-related issues in her course and promoted students' awareness of their own resistance to such issues. In addition, she utilized strategies to empower students to become change agents. Tatum's work clearly illustrates the need for structured forums to facilitate student learning about such issues.

According to Astin (1993), when left to themselves, students often affiliate with others most like themselves. Astin's (1993) longitudinal work on college students has shown that students seek peer groups based on identification, affiliation, and perception of equal status with other members of the group. Specifically, regression analyses of college impact utilized data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). CIRP is a longitudinal study of college impact sponsored by The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the American Council on Education (ACE). Analyses of CIRP data concluded that the student peer group directly affects what is termed "Social Activism." Social activism includes involvement in "'diversity' activities" which are defined as:

> activities such as discussing racial or ethnic issues, socializing with students from different racial or ethnic groups, participating in campus demonstrations, attending racial or ethnic workshops, and taking women's studies or ethnic studies courses. (Astin, 1993, p. 139)

Peer group, therefore, has an important impact on student involvement in activities related to exploring diversity. Astin found that college students' values and behavior generally change in "the direction of the dominant orientation of their peer group" (Astin, 1993, p. 363). Learning about the orientation of a particular peer group, such as the cross-cultural group profiled in this study, can then help us understand the ways in which that group's behaviors and values may change. If the dominant orientation of a peer group emphasizes a specific attitude, such as interest in exploring dialogue and interactions across difference, there is a potential that attitude may be adopted by many students in the peer group (Astin, 1993).

Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño (1994) also utilized data collected by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to learn about White, African American, Asian American, and Chicano students' interactions across difference. Their study largely drew from student background information collected using the Student Information Form (SIF), a questionnaire used by the CIRP freshman survey program. Specifically, they conducted statistical analyses (cross-tabular analysis and regression analysis) of longitudinal data from the surveys of college freshmen who were incoming students in 1987. In addition, they used data on the structural characteristics and campus climate of the institutions attended by the survey respondents (Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994).

In the past decade, the perception that students of color tend to self-segregate on college campuses has become common (Bunzel, 1992; Duster, 1993; Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994). This perception of self-segregation is due in part to the majority perspective -- self-segregation is often more visible among students of color even though they actually interact more frequently across racial and ethnic lines than do White students (Hurtado, et al., 1994). Analysis of data from the Student Information Form (SIF) showed White students less frequently studied with, dined with, or dated someone from a different racial or ethnic background than did Black, Asian, or Chicano students. For example, only 15% of white students indicated they frequently dined with someone of a different racial or ethnic background, as opposed to 72% of Chicano students, 60% of Asian students, and 49% of Black students (Hurtado, et al., 1994).

In addition, students of color faced exclusion and harassment on college campuses more frequently than did their White peers (Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994). The study showed that minority students who sought support from a hostile campus environment by participating in ethnic organizations and by socializing with others from their same ethnic group did not have less frequent cross-race interactions (Hurtado, et al., 1994). It is then White students, not students of color, who were self-segregating most frequently.

Finally, Hurtado and her colleagues (1994) found that opportunities for cross-group interactions decreased when campuses do not have a significant number of ethnic/racial minority students. However, increased numbers of students of color do not necessarily lead to cross-cultural interactions. Campuses must purposely structure forums fostering cross-group contact and must make conscious efforts to involve minority students in such forums (Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994).

Positive interactions do not necessarily occur when diverse groups of people interact. Scott and Damico (1982) utilized a canonical correlation based on results from a questionnaire administered to 267 White undergraduate students to identify the kinds of high school and college activities that encourage contact between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. They also explored the extent to which interracial contact during a student's high school years determines their interracial contact during college. Correlations showed that students who had frequent cross-race contacts in one activity during high school were likely to have cross-race contacts in other activities. In addition, students who had frequent interracial contacts in high school also tended to have frequent interracial interactions in college. The study found that school-sponsored extracurricular activities provide forums for cross-race interactions. However, mere participation in activities does not lead to positive cross-group contact (Scott and Damico, 1982). Scott and Damico (1982) specifically encouraged high schools and colleges to structure activities that meet

Allport's (1954) conditions for positive intergroup contact: equal status, cooperation, interdependence, and support from those in positions of authority.

The Diversity Project, a two-year study of student life at the University of California at Berkeley, was commissioned by the chancellor to explore how students were experiencing increased ethnic and racial diversity on campus (Duster, 1993). The project, with Duster as principal investigator, examined many student life issues including how and why miscommunication occurred between the diverse racial and ethnic groups on campus (Duster, 1993). On a campus where no racial or ethnic group is in the majority, 70 percent of all undergraduates agreed with the statement: "'I'd like to meet more students from ethnic and cultural backgrounds that are different from my own'" (Duster, 1993, p. 240). Although students from varied groups shared an interest in interactions across difference, they had different approaches to such interactions (Duster, 1993). White students expressed both a willingness and a desire to be friends with Black students but "were less likely to want interracial contact in the context of special programs, courses, or activities that structure interethnic contacts" (Duster, 1993, p. 241). In contrast, Black students preferred interaction within the context of special programs, courses, and activities, and were less interested in interracial friendships or social activities. Duster suggested these varied approaches demonstrated the "polymorphous character of interethnic relations on campus" as well as the need for a range of environments and options for exploring interactions across difference (Duster, 1993, p. 241).

Schoem and Stevenson (1990) also emphasized the need for college campuses to provide forums for student interactions and dialogues across difference. They used classroom observations, survey data, and student journals as data sources to study intergroup dialogue and interactions in a freshman seminar entitled Blacks and Jews: Dialogue on Ethnic Identity Issues. Students in the course self-selected to apply for the instructor's permission to take the course and expressed their willingness to participate honestly, fully, and openly in discussions (Schoem and Stevenson, 1990). This course was the first experience most of the students had with interactions beyond superficial conversations with members of other ethnic groups. Therefore, directed discussions and extensive required readings on majority-minority relations, ethnic identity, the Black and Jewish experiences in America, and Black-Jewish relations in America were considered an essential foundation for dialogue. Regular discussions over an extended period (two weekly meetings for fourteen weeks) of time in a structured environment were important in facilitating meaningful dialogue and learning between Black and Jewish students (Schoem and Stevenson, 1990). The study found that students in the course developed an informed perspective on Black-Jewish relations, learned about their own identities as Blacks or Jews, and learned about the other group:

> the students learned how complex were the issues they were studying. . .They understood better that there could be no concluding lecture with simple answers to black-Jewish relations. . . The Jewish students had been challenged by the black students to more closely examine their identity as Jews apart from being "just like other whites". . .and the black students were pushed to make distinctions among whites, to recognize that not all nonblacks were part of a single white monolith.
> (Schoem and Stevenson, 1990, pp. 592-593)

Schoem and Stevenson (1990) urged universities to devote more attention to intergroup dialogue and to developing avenues for students to pursue meaningful intergroup contact. The studies reviewed all highlight the need for universities with diverse student populations to provide structured forums for interactions and dialogue across difference in order to facilitate cross-cultural learning.

This literature review examined varied approached to facilitating positive interactions across difference. Initially, the "colorblind perspective" of approaching others supposedly without considering their race was raised as an ineffective and inadequate approach to interpersonal interactions among diverse people (Burbles and Rice, 1991;

Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Schofield, 1995). When interacting across difference, it is important to acknowledge another person's multiple identities and to realize that a variety of identities in addition to color or race are salient (Delpit, 1991; Tatum, 1992). Acknowledging difference paves the way for dialogue that has the potential to facilitate toleration, respect, and understanding among diverse people (Burbules and Rice, 1991). Recognizing the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions need not invoke stereotypes or prejudice, instead it may help improve dialogue as people potentially develop a flexible construction of identity and broaden their understandings of both themselves and of others (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Schofield, 1995).

Several factors that improve positive cross-cultural interactions and dialogue were proposed and tested by varied studies. Specifically, equal status, cooperation, understanding, and support from those in positions of authority were found to promote positive intergroup relations (Allport, 1954; Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño, 1994; Scott and Damico, 1982; Stephan and Stephan, 1985). In addition, the notion that students experiencing interactions across difference need to be guided in processing both the intellectual and emotional aspects of exploring diversity was supported (Tatum, 1992).

College students often affiliate with peers most like themselves, and students' behaviors and values tend to be influenced by the orientation of their peer group (Astin, 1993). Although students often associate with peers from similar backgrounds, students of color interact more frequently across racial and ethnic lines than White students (Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño, 1994). White students indicated a desire to be friends with Black students, while Black students preferred cross-group contact within the context of special programs and activities (Duster, 1993). Therefore, the works reviewed suggested the need for fostering positive cross-group interactions within a variety of contexts.

Sustained interventions that provide varied opportunities for interactions across difference while addressing the emotional and intellectual challenges of such interactions were called for by the studies reviewed (Duster, 1993; Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño, 1994; Schoem and Stevenson, 1990; Scott and Damico, 1982; Stephan and Stephan, 1985; Tatum, 1992). The present study looks at the experiences of college undergraduates involved in such a program. The cross-cultural program described in this study was a year-long program designed to promote interactions across difference both within the context of friendships and social settings and within organized program and campus activities. The program provided opportunities for participants to process the intellectual and emotional challenges they encountered as they explored diversity. This study illuminates perspectives on interactions across difference held by participants in a program meeting the conditions raised in this review.

Methods

Setting and Context

This study was conducted on the campus of a major research university during the spring of 1995. Students in the study participated in a pilot program initiated by the university's multicultural educator in the fall of 1994. The program, given the pseudonym Explorations for this study, was designed to prompt first year undergraduates to interact with students from varied social identity groups. The term social identity group refers to identifying as a member of a particular group based on one's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, ability, religion, class, or geographic origin. Approximately thirty freshman from these varied groups volunteered to participate in a year-long program intended to encourage students to become cross-cultural mentors and allies for each other. Cross-cultural interactions in this context refer to interactions among people from different social identity groups. Group activities challenged participating students to explore how to become and remain friends despite their differences.

A central goal of the Explorations program was to create strong connections and bonds among these students from different social identity groups and to build a sense of community within and across undergraduate campus residences. The coordinator of the Explorations program described the connections and bonds fostered by the program as, "building relationships

between students as learning allies, partnerships where students stand unwaveringly in support of each other as they explore, examine, and mediate the interplay between diversity and unity in a campus community" (Explorations Program Coordinator). This campus community can be characterized broadly by Webster's definition of community: "a group of people living together as a smaller social unit within a larger one, and having interests, work, etc. in common (a college community)" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1986). The Explorations program thus cultivated a system of support and partnerships among students living together on a campus that strives to celebrate students' differences while also developing a broader sense of unity.

The Position Of Multicultural Educator.

The coordinator of the Explorations program is the university's multicultural educator. It is helpful to be aware his role in order to better understand the program and its history. When I asked Tim (a pseudonym), the Explorations program coordinator, to define his role as multicultural educator, he gave the following description:

> I am responsible for building stronger human relationships among students at {the university}. My role is to design and coordinate the delivery of educational programs that will build a student community's capacity to interact, dialogue, and to learn from diverse peers so that the promise and benefits of diversity are attained.
> (Explorations Program Coordinator)

Tim initiated the Explorations program in the fall of 1994 as one means to move towards these goals.

Program Vision And Goals.

The first year, Tim started Explorations as a pilot program and initially recruited thirty freshmen to participate. The program was touted as "the frosh multicultural education program for 1994-95" and was designed to raise awareness about diversity issues and to promote cross-cultural connections among new students (Program Materials, 1994). Another goal of the program was to foster class unity. This goal reflected the larger university administration's emphasis on building class unity to eventually promote stronger alumni support of the institution. The preliminary program description outlined Tim's initial vision for the group -- the program "attempts to address contemporary diversity challenges and dilemmas by inviting members of the class of 1998 to build a cross cultural support group which will act as a springboard for its members' personal development and contribution to a stronger campus community" (Program Materials, 1994). Four initial goals and objectives for the program included: 1) introducing new students to diversity in the campus community; 2) providing a foundation for ongoing diversity dialogues, cross cultural interaction, intellectual discussion, and personal exploration; 3) presenting likely diversity challenges; 4) setting directions for the campus community (Program Materials, 1994). The vision was to bring together a committed group of students to be cross-cultural mentors and allies for each other as they explored diversity issues.

Profile of the Pilot Program.

Thirty students from 16 different residences across the university campus were initially recruited for the Explorations pilot program in the fall of 1994. In order to promote the program and recruit students, Tim described his cross-cultural program to students working as resident assistants in the university's dormitories. Early in the fall term, he asked the resident assistants to recruit participants for the program in two ways. First, resident assistants were asked to nominate students to participate in the program by identifying students they thought would have an interest in the program and sending those names on to Tim. In addition, the resident assistants were asked to make an announcement about the program at one of the first dormitory meetings held in the fall. Tim then

proceeded to recruit students by contacting those students whose names had been given to him by resident assistants and by talking to students who approached him about the program.

The Explorations program year began with a brief application for interested students. All interested students were asked to fill out a short application. The application asked for basic demographic information and asked a few brief questions about diversity issues (e.g., What is the value of developing an understanding of and respect for both my own culture(s), language(s), beliefs/religions, and ethnic origins and those of other people?).

Meetings did not occur at regular pre-established dates and times. Instead, Tim organized a meeting every few weeks and contacted students to let them know when and where meetings would be held. The group met four times total during fall and winter terms. The group then met more frequently during spring term. Throughout the year meetings were held in different dorms and cultural centers across campus.

The original 30 students on the roster did not all stay involved in the program throughout the year. According to Tim, a core group of approximately 15-18 students emerged. He characterized those students as ones who seemed committed to the program even if they did not attend every meeting.

Two group meetings and one campus event sponsored by the group occurred during my two week visit to the campus. My first contact with program participants occurred at an Explorations group business meeting and discussion attended by ten students in late April. During this meeting Tim introduced me as a graduate student conducting research on diversity issues and interested in talking with program participants about their experiences exploring diversity. At the meeting, students also signed up for individual interviews with me; Tim re-emphasized the purpose of the program, and the group strategized and planned for activities during the rest of spring term. In addition, the group planned a meeting for the following week.

In the middle of my first week in the field, a drum group came to campus to perform. The event was sponsored by the Explorations program. Attendance at the performance was minimal because students were in the midst of mid-term exams A few days later, eight students attended a meeting where Tim conducted a group exercise focused on exploring diversity issues and students' own identities and experiences with diversity. I acted as a participant observer during this activity. I also interviewed students individually, attended a number of campus events attended by various program participants, and conducted a focus group.

A few weeks after my visit, the final meeting of the year gathered a small group of students together for a wrap-up discussion and celebration with desserts catered by a local bakery. Tim noted the relatively small number of students present at the meeting was probably because the meeting was held just before spring term final exams. However, he said he still believed, as he had noted previously, that there were 15-18 core students who had been really committed to the program at least in spirit even if they did not attend all of the meetings throughout the year. Tim told me the students were supportive of the program, wanted to see it continue the next year, and were eager to help over the summer with planning for the next year.

The program vision and goals became more clearly defined as Tim was informed by his experiences with the program during the pilot year. He credited the students who participated in the pilot program as pioneers and planned to develop opportunities for current students to stay involved in activities similar to Explorations after their freshman year. The evolving vision of the Explorations program as presented in the program brochure developed for the second year was:

> [This program is] a multidimensional learning program, combining intellectual, emotional, and interactive learning experiences. It offers you the support to face, to experience, and to explore diversity dilemmas. The. . . program will

> encourage each of you to develop a new personal ethic for welcoming and addressing diversity in your life.
> (Program Materials, 1995)

A historical view of the program's development has been given to provide a context for better understanding experiences of program participants selected as case studies for this study.

Participants.

A group of first-year undergraduate students involved in the Explorations program was observed and interviewed during the third term of their first year of college. The thirteen students who volunteered to be interviewed represent a core group of students identified by Tim, the program coordinator, as those most involved and interested in the program. Of the thirteen participants in the study, four were male and nine female; one identified as African American/Black, four as Asian American/Pacific Islander, six as European American/White, and two as Biracial/Multiracial. Students who were interviewed represent diverse ethnic, religious, and geographic backgrounds.

I conducted case studies of Kathy, Ken, and Mary (all pseudonyms), three participants in the Explorations program. All three were active participants in the program throughout the academic year, and they were all college freshmen between the ages of eighteen and nineteen. Ken, Kathy, and Mary in particular were selected as case studies because they were the students whose views of diversity I was able to learn most about during my field work. In addition to the questionnaire, individual interview, and participant observation data I collected from all thirteen participants in the study, they were the three students who came to a focus group I conducted. I was familiar Kathy, Ken, and Mary prior to the focus group discussion because it took place after the interviews, questionnaires, and participant observations had all been completed. Those prior contacts allowed me to develop a sense of each student's experiences with diversity, and thus provided a foundation for an informative focus group discussion.

Data Collection.

This is multi-method descriptive study designed to explore college students' perceptions and beliefs about interactions across difference. Specifically, undergraduate participants in the Explorations program were asked to describe and interpret their own experiences with and perspectives on cross-group interactions. This study utilized four methods of data collection.

1) Questionnaire Participants in the study were asked to complete a three-page questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire asked for basic demographic information and asked students to indicate their experiences with cross-cultural interactions both in high school and thus far in college. Students were asked about frequency and type of interactions with peers from different backgrounds. For example, questions asked how frequently (never, occasionally, frequently) students dined with, socialized with, and studied with someone of another racial or ethnic background during their first year of college. In order to keep the questionnaire brief, questions focused specifically on Explorations students' interactions with peers from racial or ethnic groups other than their own. Then, during individual interviews students were also asked about their interactions with peers from a variety of social identity groups. The questionnaire data helped provide a composite picture of the program group and provided a foundation for the individual interviews and focus group (Patton, 1987) (see Appendices A and B).

2) Interviews I conducted tape recorded, in-depth semi-structured interviews with each student participating in the study asking about his or her experiences with cross-cultural interactions at college and prior to entering college (Weiss, 1994). I used a guiding set of questions I had developed in consultation with the program coordinator and asked students to describe the ways in which their experiences with diversity and interactions across difference were different during their first year of college than they were in high school (see Appendix C). Students were asked to talk about how they approached interacting with some one different from themselves and were asked if this approach changed since they entered college. They were also asked to talk about their involvement with the Explorations program -- how they learned about the

program initially, whether and in what ways their involvement with the program had impacted their interactions across difference, and what their recommendations for the following year were based on their assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

3) Participant Observations The third source of data consisted of participant observations. I acted as a participant observer in two Explorations group activities with the students. I observed a business meeting of the program group and an exercise in which students were asked to acknowledge and label their own differences (e.g., identifying as disabled or acknowledging that they had dated inter-racially). During the business meeting, I took detailed notes focusing on the discussion and describing what was said and who was talking. The discussion largely centered on sharing information about various campus events related to diversity issues that the Explorations students might be interested in attending and on planning future program meetings and activities. During my second participant observation, I audio taped and took notes on the discussion that occurred within the context of a group exercise facilitated by Tim. In both cases, I observed group discussions in order to learn about the program participants' descriptions of their experiences with and perspectives on interactions across difference. Therefore, I focused on recording the content of the discussion and who was speaking. These observations allowed me to see the students in a group setting and helped me to better understand the program activities (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 1995; Patton, 1987).

4) Focus Group The final data source was an audio taped focus group I conducted with the three case study participants, Ken, Kathy, and Mary. The focus group discussion centered around the students' descriptions of their own consciousness of or blindness to varied identities in interactions across difference (see Appendix D). The focus group was my final contact with program students during my fieldwork, so it provided an opportunity to explore with the students topics from the individual interviews, participant observations, and conversations that seemed particularly striking (Patton, 1987).

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused specifically on the responses of three core students as defined by the program coordinator, Tim (Weiss, 1994). Tim characterized core students as those students who participated in the program throughout the year and who seemed committed to the program and its goals even if they did not attend every meeting. Each of the three students completed a questionnaire and participated in an individual interview, a focus group, and the two group activities in which I acted as a participant observer. Use of multiple data sources allowed for triangulation. The data were analyzed for themes, patterns, and variations in the students' perspectives and experiences.

I began data analysis by compiling each case study student's questionnaire answers in a chart in order to produce a brief profile of the students' experiences with diversity in high school and during their freshman year of college (see Appendix B). I was then able to compare the responses students had given on the questionnaires to what they said in the transcripts of the interviews, group activity, and focus group. For example, if a student indicated on the questionnaire that she had many friends from other racial and ethnic groups in college and that she frequently socialized with students from other racial and ethnic groups, I then looked to the transcripts to examine what specifically she said about those friendships and social relationships. The questionnaire data provided a source of information in addition to the transcripts and allowed me to look for consistencies (or inconsistencies) in the students' descriptions of their interactions across difference. Overall, the responses the students gave on the questionnaire were consistent with their remarks in the interview, focus group, and group activity. The questionnaire was thus a useful source for triangulation.

Additional data analysis primarily focused on coded transcripts. An inductively generated set of preliminary codes emerged from interview and focus group transcripts. Further analysis of the transcripts led to the development of an expanded set of codes (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 1995). For example, one initial code was "self as identity blind/conscious." This single code was then expanded into multiple codes including, identity blind--self initially, identity blind--self acquainted, identity conscious--self initially,

identity conscious--self overall. After establishing and refining codes and emergent themes, I conducted three case studies to explicate key themes and terms. Coded transcripts and questionnaires from each student were examined to explore their individual conceptions of interactions across difference. Specifically, I sorted coded excerpts from transcripts of the individual interviews, focus group, and group exercise by code and by student. Three recurrent themes, relationship, context, and particular identity, appeared to be especially salient. Relationship is defined as the extent to which people know each other; context refers to the setting and situation in which people interact, and particular identity refers to identities, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, or class, either claimed by an individual or attributed to one individual by another. These three factors were prominent in the students' descriptions of their own cross-cultural interactions and are explicated below in the case studies.

Emergent Terms

During the course of the study three terms emerged from the data as useful categorizations for the phenomena I was observing. These terms, *identity blind*, *identity conscious*, and *identity orientation*, are not indigenous terms originally used by participants in the study, but neither are they preconceived exogenous terms (Patton, 1987). The terms were inspired by my interactions with the student participants and the program director. The terms emerged as ways to frame understandings I developed from my interpretations of the students' descriptions of their own experiences with and perceptions of cross-cultural interactions. In the process of data analysis, the three factors defined above, relationship, context, and particular identity, all appeared to mediate these students' blindness to or consciousness of identity.

In contrast to the notion of color blindness which narrowly focuses only on race, my conception of identity blindness and identity consciousness accounts for the importance of multiple identities in interactions across difference (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Paley, 1979/1989; Tatum, 1992). The concept of identity blindness or consciousness suggests that when interacting with another person, one perceives him/herself as either blind to or conscious of the other's identities (color, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, class, geographic origin, etc.). Identity orientation refers to a person's blindness to or consciousness of the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions.

Identity consciousness can be constructed with both positive and negative connotations. A negative construction of identity consciousness suggests that a person who is identity conscious perceives another person's identities (color, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) and utilizes that recognition to classify the other person. Those classifications then may lead to stereotyped, negative, or derogatory assumptions about the other or may be used for exclusionary or discriminatory purposes (Schofield, 1995).

In contrast, the data from this study led me to frame identity consciousness positively. I define identity consciousness as perceiving identities and recognizing the salience of another's multiple identities in interpersonal interactions. For example, a positive construction of identity consciousness implies not using another's identities for exclusionary or discriminatory purposes but, rather, recognizing the impact a person's identities may have on their perceptions, experiences, and interactions.

When I asked the three students profiled in the case studies to describe and characterize their own consciousness of or blindness to others' identities, I learned about the complexities of these students' perspectives on identity issues in their interactions. It became clear that identity orientation was not a static or dichotomous category but a fluid continuum affected by varied aspects of students' interactions. Specifically, three factors, relationship, context, and particular identity, seemed to impact these students' identity orientations. These students seemed to hold conscious and unconscious ideals about proper conduct towards someone who is different, and identity orientation (identity blindness or consciousness) may have influenced that conduct.

Case Study -- Ken

Background

Ken was a nineteen-year-old White male who attended a public high school on the West Coast. He is Jewish and indicated this is an important aspect of his identity. During his high school years, Ken's family lived in a predominately White upper middle class neighborhood populated by a large number of Jewish families. His high school had a diverse student body but there was "not a large amount of interaction between groups" (Questionnaire). However, Ken had many friends from varied racial/ethnic groups and interacted with students from different groups occasionally socially and during lunch and frequently in classes and on a sports team. During his first year of college, he frequently interacted with students from different social identity groups while studying as well as in his dormitory, in social situations, and in his extracurricular activities.

High School Experiences with Diversity

Although many students in his high school did not interact with students from other social identity groups, Ken noted that he had friends from a variety of groups. His self-proclaimed dedication to learning about diversity was largely influenced by a seminal experience he had during his high school years. The summer after his junior year of high school, Ken spent a week at a camp designed to facilitate high school students' cross-cultural explorations:

> And there's a major experience that I had that really sparked my interest in multiculturalism or just subjects on that issue. You're probably heard of it. . .It's called "Camp Anytown."
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 1)

> And ah so I went to this camp. And the major emphasis of the camp is like to break down the barriers and to talk about stuff that you usually don't talk about . . . So, it was a couple weeks after school ended during the summer. And um we went up there, and you stay in cabins. You have a cabin group, and you get to know them. And then they break down into discussion groups and you have a different topic. But the real special thing, I think, about the camp is the devices they use in order to break through. It really made a huge impression on me.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Ken said he was so inspired by his experiences exploring diversity at Camp Anytown that he returned to his high school "dedicated to doing something" and started a student organization to encourage his peers to discuss and think about issues related to discrimination and prejudice (Individual Interview Transcript). He also returned to the camp for several summers first as a counselor in training and then as a counselor. Ken observed that he left high school already attuned to cross-cultural explorations.

Freshman Year of College

Ken noted that he wanted to continue his explorations of diversity in college. Early in his freshman year, he sought opportunities to become involved with campus organizations fostering cross-cultural interactions:

> So, then when I came to {college}, um, like naturally I was really involved. And I'd met Tim (the Explorations program director) like the first week of school . . . Because there was like some orientation things that were dealing with cross-cultural issues, and I went.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 12)

Ken came to college already open to exploring diversity issues and interested in interacting with people from different social identity groups. At the beginning of his freshman year,

he became involved in the Explorations program and also joined another club that sponsored interactive cultural activities. According to Ken, the cultural club focused more on learning about other cultures through fun activities rather than on discussing deeper issues related to interactions across difference. He commented that although the club did "serve a good purpose" he preferred activities that promote contemplation of more "controversial" issues. Therefore, he decided to lead a group discussion on stereotypes for the club in order to foster more "substantial" discussion of diversity issues (Individual Interview Transcript). Ken also explored interactions across difference in the course of his daily activities as he frequently interacted with a diverse group of peers in his friendships, his dorm, his studies, his social life, and his extracurricular activities.

Self-Characterization of Identity Orientation

Relationship

Ken was particularly aware of the salience and complexity of identity in cross-cultural interactions. When asked whether he considered himself to be identity conscious or identity blind when he meets people, Ken characterized himself as identity or color conscious:

> . . . I would consider myself, like, very color conscious when I meet a person. And I think, like, the way that I look at it is it's just like if you meet someone with black hair, or a mustache, or something like that's part of who they are. . . You know, if you meet someone in a wheelchair, like, yeah, you know, they're in a wheelchair or something. I think that's definitely like part of what they bring to the table when you, when you meet them. And I think, like, I don't know, I'm really conscious of things like that. So, you know, if I met, you know, a Black guy in (a class) section, you know, I would be aware that, you know, that's who he was. And I think like the important part for me though is not, you know, think color consciously, it doesn't really have too many connot. . ., connotations for me. But, like, as far as I look at it, just like being conscious of who he is and knowing that, you know, like I. . . It's so funny because all these like, like. . . It's funny because I think about it a lot, a lot of stereotypes like fly through my mind all the time. But it's like I'm. . . I'm more aware of it, and like more aware not to make assumptions. . . (Focus Group Transcription, pp. 2-3)

Ken used the term color conscious to refer to being conscious not only of color or race but of other identities as well. A person's identities, be it race or disability, are part of "what they bring to the table" when meeting another person, according to Ken. Ken recognized the importance of acknowledging another person's multiple identities. He was also cognizant that people's multiple identities impact their experiences and perspectives and thus may influence their interpersonal interactions.

Therefore, relationship, or how well he was acquainted with some one and the type of relationship he had with them (roommate, classmate, co-worker, etc.), impacted Ken's identity orientation. Although Ken characterized himself as initially identity conscious when he meets a person, he became less identity conscious as he developed friendships:

> But with my friendships and stuff, I don't know, I mean I think my friendships have just been sort of blind. . . (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 13)

For Ken, identity orientation shifts as he gets to know a person.

In particular, Ken viewed people's identities more as elements of the whole person as he becomes acquainted with them. In response to another student's comment that she was identity blind when she initially meets someone and then becomes more cognizant of the person's identities as she gets to know them, Ken noted:

> I think like what you're saying , like I think I'm sort of the opposite of what you were saying about like you notice a person sort of blind, and then as you get to know them you begin to like incorporate who they are and where they're coming from. Like, I think I sort of notice them as like who they appear to be. Like, um, obviously I think race would be a part of that. And then as I get to know them better and better, like, they just, it, it I see them more as a whole person because I know more about them. And, um, so I think that's, that's where I'm coming from. But, um, yeah it's tough because I think on this campus the general conception would be like, I don't know, just talking to people around the dorm and stuff, is that like it's very like sort of race and culture conscious, yet it wants to treat everyone equally. So, it wants to be both. (Focus Group Transcript, p. 20)

As Ken becomes better acquainted with someone, he becomes more identity blind in some ways -- the more he sees them as a whole person and the less he sees them as who they appear to be. He reflected on the tension between being identity (or race) conscious yet treating people equally. Ultimately, for Ken, it was essential to both acknowledge the salience of another person's identities and to treat them as a whole person.

Particular Identity

Particular identities also impacted Ken's consciousness of identity in his interactions. For him, it was impossible to initially meet someone and be blind to their visible identities unless one was literally blind or visually impaired:

> I mean, obviously when you meet someone you see them. . . So, you can't be blind to them. But I think what we're talking about is like seeing them as who they are and then making assumptions about what you see. And then acting on those assumptions. (Focus Group Transcript, p. 23)

If one can actually see some aspect of another person's identity, such as their race, gender, or disability, then Ken suggested one cannot claim to be blind to that identity.

However, Ken also recognized that all identities may not be visible. As he described his experiences with his own invisible identity as a Jew, he realized that people may not be aware of the salience of an another person's invisible identities:

> Yeah, I mean, like invisible things are much, I think, um. Like I'm Jewish, so on on one hand I can sort of relate. . . because I mean no one would really know I was Jewish unless I said anything about it. And that, you know, I've experienced situations where like people have been like blatantly like anti-Semitic like right in front of me. . . You know, then, I'll I'll say, "Dude, I'm Jewish." Or something like that. Or I'll get pissed off or something. (Focus Group Transcript, p. 35)

Ken observed that some identities, such as religion, are often invisible unless a person chooses to reveal them. An invisible identity, such as Ken's Jewish identity, may be important to an individual yet may not be immediately apparent when they first meet another person. As Ken recognized, often it is only if a person chooses to reveal an invisible identity that another person will learn of its salience.

Ken proposed that one way to negotiate cross-cultural interactions when one's knowledge of people's identities may be limited is to attempt not to make assumptions about their identities. That is, try not to make any assumptions about what another person's religion, or sexual orientation, or class, etc. may be. There is, however, a fine

line between being sensitive and aware and being overly cautious, according to Ken. He and the other students participating in a focus group discussed the balance between being sensitive and being intrusive when they meet someone new:

Kathy: . . .Because of all the invisible things you don't want to go in to some, "OK, you know. Let me ask you all these questions." You know. "So, let's get to, I'm going to get to know you now. So, what religion are you? What da, da, da." You know. And that makes things so impersonal in a sense. And also very, you're like over-stepping your bounds.

Mary: Intrusive.

Kathy: Yeah.

Ken: It's impractical too, I think.

Kathy: Yeah. There's no way that these little invisible things are like on the outside going to just automatically pop out from.

Ken: Yeah. I don't know. I think, you know, as much as you'd like to try to help it. The, you know, in the ideal world no one would be offended or anything. But, yeah, people are going to get offended. And I think stepping from there, like there's definitely places you should go from there. If you offend someone, you know, like, if you find out and if you know them well, or something like, apologize. Or just like there's definitely things that you can do. . .

(Focus Group Transcript, pp. 36-37)

Ken and the other students suggested that it is necessary to recognize the salience of identity in cross-cultural interactions, yet one should not be intrusive in pushing another person to reveal all of their identities immediately. In addition, the students submitted that one should not be overly conscious of identity to the point of impracticality. As Ken pointed out, since one cannot necessarily know all of another person's identities unless that person chooses to share their invisible identities, it is almost inevitable that at times people will offend each other. Therefore, he suggested, if one person in some way offends another due to lack of awareness of particularly salient identity issues, it is then important to acknowledge the mistake and apologize. The students emphasized that although it is certainly essential to be sensitive of others' identities in order to foster positive cross-cultural interactions, it is also necessary to realize that sometimes people will offend one another with intending to do so.

Context

For Ken, it was not only particular identity or relationship that affected his consciousness of identity, but also context. He suggested that the context in which one person interacts with another impacts identity orientation:

Kristen: Um hm. What about at {this university}, what do you think? Do you feel like you're pushed to see or not see, or acknowledge or not acknowledge people's identities?

Ken: I think it depends what context. . . I think it really depends what context. Like, I don't know, in the dorms, I think it's just a real, a real equal environment. Kind of like, "Hey, everyone's here." . . .But, yeah. It depends like where you involve yourself. . . Like across the {university} community, I guess. If you go to, you know, like a discussion on inter-racial dating or something like that, you know, it's going to be much more conscious of, of who you are and where you're coming from. And, um. But, yeah, I think it, it depends where you are. . .

> There are certain instances where it really isn't. And then there's, there's other instances where it really is an issue.
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 15-16)

Ken observed that identity becomes a more prominent aspect of interactions in certain contexts. As Ken submitted, in routine daily interactions within the dormitory, he tended to de-emphasize particular identities. However, if a discussion or situation arose in which particular identities become especially salient, such as in a discussion on inter-racial dating, Ken noted he then becomes more identity conscious. He recognized that in the course of daily routines, such as when washing his face in the dorm bathroom, the race of the person at the sink next to him was not particularly relevant. However, when discussing inter-racial dating with that same person, race became much more significant because a person's race might well impact their experiences with and perspectives on inter-racial dating. Therefore, Ken's consciousness of identity was heightened in contexts where a particular identity was especially relevant or salient.

Ken also realized that the context in which people interact may influence how much they either reveal about their own identities or are able to determine about other people's identities: "I mean, depending on where they meet you they may know more or less about you," (Focus Group Transcript, p. 24). For example, a student may not realize that his neighbor in the dorm is Jewish until he notices the Jewish student eating matzo during Passover. Therefore, Ken observed, context can shape both how consequential identity may be in a particular situation and the knowledge two people have about each other's identities.

Awareness of Diversity Issues on Campus

A critical distinction Ken made was the distinction between recognizing another person's identities and making assumptions based on those identities. He thus employed the notion of identity consciousness in its positive construction by recognizing the salience of identity in interactions but not making assumptions based on identity categories. Although stereotypes may have crossed Ken's mind when he met someone from a different social identity group, he was conscious of those stereotypes and actively sought not to act on those assumptions in his interactions. He noted that being aware of the stereotypes in his own mind could be constructive because it reminded him that he held some assumptions and stereotypes and needed to make a conscious choice not to listen to or act on those assumptions:

> . . .a lot of stereotypes like fly through my mind all the time. . .I'm more aware of it, and like more aware not to make assumptions. . .Sometimes I feel bad because like they all fly through my mind. But, I guess, in retrospect, I look at it, I think it's some what of a good thing because it just makes me aware, you know, oh, I kept assuming many of these things.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 3)

Ken was conscious of other students' identities in his interpersonal interactions, yet he also tried to be aware of the assumptions and stereotypes he held and made an effort not to let those assumptions impact his interactions. He recognized, for example, that a student's race or ethnicity may impact that student's experiences and interactions, yet made a conscious effort not to let stereotypes influence the way he interacted with a particular student.

One of the significant advantages of attending a university with a diverse student body, according to Ken, is the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of people. He noted that one benefit of such diverse interactions was the potential to break the stereotypes one holds by meeting people who discredit those stereotypes. For Ken, recognizing the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions was a way to pique his own awareness of both the import of identity and the potential assumptions one might make based on identity.

In spite of his own awareness of diversity issues and challenges, Ken recognized that the campus community does face obstacles to cross-cultural understanding. The backlash on campus against political correctness (PC) particularly discouraged Ken since he believed the university's diverse student body is one of its great strengths:

> One of the things you (the researcher) haven't asked about it, but I wanted to bring it up, is just like the attitude of the. . . students about multiculturalism or about crossing the the boundaries. I've been so disgusted almost about it. Because that, and it really it really like disheartens me to hear, you know, I hear it like a lot like at meals and stuff. . . And it's just this PC term comes up all the time. And there's such a backlash. You know, it's not "correct," it's not "right." It's politically correct. And like it's got such bad connotations that, you know, oh, I don't know. It's it just it just discourages me to see people who just write it, you know, anything off that is like is treating another human being like, you know, a human being, like as something that's just politically correct. (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 17)

Although this particular university has a diverse student body, Ken realized that all students on campus are not open to the potential benefits of exploring that diversity. Ken was personally dedicated to exploring issues and dilemmas surrounding interactions across difference. However, he also recognized that many other students need to be actively encouraged to explore diversity issues.

Summary

Even during his high school years, Ken was cognizant of the challenges of interacting across difference. He was already attuned to some of the challenges of interactions across difference when he entered college because he had previously pursued opportunities to explore diversity issues in high school. In addition, during his first year of college, he actively sought out ways to continue to his explorations of diversity and involved himself in several campus organizations facilitating cross-cultural learning. Both in high school and during his first year of college, Ken interacted with diverse peers in a variety of settings.

Ken professed his own interest in multicultural issues, and his comments demonstrate his awareness of the salience of identity in interactions across difference. He described himself as identity conscious when he first meets someone but noted that he becomes less identity conscious as he gets to know them. He recognized that some identities are visible and other invisible. He also talked about how certain relationships and contexts may make particular identities more or less prominent and more or less salient. Ken was aware of opportunities and challenges surrounding living in a diverse campus community, yet he did not bring up any particular conflicts he encountered in his own interactions across difference. However, he also realized that not all students are either aware of or interested in exploring diversity. Ken was dedicated to furthering his own cross-cultural understanding and was active in campus organizations that seek to foster such understanding.

Case Study -- Kathy

Background

Kathy was an eighteen-year-old Asian American female who attended a predominately White private high school in the Southwest. Throughout her primary and secondary school years, she also attended Chinese school on weekends. She indicated that she identified most strongly as a female and then as a Chinese American. Kathy grew up in a "multicultural, metropolitan city," but her family lived in a predominately White, upper middle class neighborhood (Questionnaire). Both in high school and in her first year of college, Kathy had many friends from different racial and ethnic groups and frequently interacted with students from different groups in academic, social, and extracurricular settings. She indicated that she was not particularly involved with organized Asian American ethnic organizations on campus during her freshman year of college. Although, she did participate in a volunteer project organized by Asian American students to bring local Asian eighth graders to campus to help them "deal with their middle school experiences" (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 6).

High School Experiences With Diversity

Kathy's awareness of diversity issues developed as she moved from an elementary school where her friends were predominately White to high school where she had a racially diverse group of friends. She observed that she was not consciously aware of diversity issues when she was young:

> Well, I went to a private school for thirteen years. And didn't wasn't really aware of like race and ethnicity when I was really young. . .I was the only Chinese girl in my class. . .until um seventh grade. And then one girl came in. And then ninth grade some other girl, another Chinese girl came in. But then like as I grew older, like from seventh grade on to high school, more like noticed, it was noticeably different. Like um more diversity. . . . probably more Asian students. . .Hispanic students . . .And then another African American girl came in in ninth grade. So, it was kind of really sparse I would say. . . . Actually, high school was more of a more of an Asian community. But I wasn't necessarily a part of that. . . Because I'd be. . . I'd been there for so long that my friends were the ones who had been there for a long time too.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Prior to high school, Kathy was friends with the Chinese girls she knew from Saturdays at Chinese school and the White students that surrounded her in her elementary school. Her high school was still predominately White, although there was also more of an Asian contingent. Kathy, however, said she reached out to "other kinds of people" in high school and developed a diverse group of friends:

> And then um the group of friends that I became close to from ninth grade to twelfth grade, like we have a picture in like senior page a could do a Benetton commercial or something. . .But there were only like it was like two Chinese girls, an Indian, an African American girl, a Japanese, and a White girl. . .And like we were really close friends. So. That was cool.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Kathy found ways to explore diversity even in a fairly homogenous atmosphere.

Kathy said she learned about her Chinese cultural background in Chinese school and at Chinese youth summer camp. Like Ken, she also spent a week one high school summer at Camp Anytown, a camp designed to facilitate high school students' cross-cultural explorations. In addition, Kathy and her high school friends engaged in discussions about a wide range of issues, including education, affirmative action, and inter-

racial dating. Still, she noted that she had little personal experience with issues related to class, sexual orientation, and disability prior to her freshman year of college.

Freshman Year Of College

Kathy entered college having had experience with interactions across difference during high school years and interested in further cross-cultural explorations. Several people in her dorm were involved in the Explorations program, and she decided to become involved because the program sounded "cool." She noted that her participation in the program helped her learn more about the diversity of the campus community and more about her own perceptions of diversity. When asked to describe the Explorations program she said it was about:

> Getting to know your yourself and what you feel about the. . .
> the diversity in the campus. And like have you been in
> situations where you are uncomfortable. . .er if you have,
> why have you been uncomfortable. . .And just explore. . .
> while you explore the community, you can explore yourself too.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 19)

Kathy observed that the program encouraged her to expand her explorations of diversity both by putting herself in situations she might not have otherwise, such as visiting ethnic community centers and a Black student community meeting, and by examining her own views of people different from herself.

In addition to furthering her own cross-cultural explorations, Kathy's volunteer work with a program for Asian American eighth graders involved her in facilitating others' learning about diversity issues. This enrichment program addressed a variety of issues facing local eighth grade students, including racism, peer pressure, and gangs. Kathy thus found a variety of ways to pursue learning about interactions across difference during her freshman year of college.

Self-Characterization Of Identity Orientation

Relationship

Kathy's relationship with someone, or how well she knows a person, had a marked impact on her identity orientation. When asked whether she considers herself to be identity blind or identity conscious when she meets people, she characterized herself as initially color or identity blind. Kathy said she tends to be identity blind when she first meets people but becomes more aware of their identities as she gets to know them:

> . . .when I go around meeting people I don't
> really consciously think of. . . It's more like
> personality that attracts me to someone. . .
> And it's not really, I don't see their color first or their. . .or
> their, their um particular identity. But then after getting to
> know them a little better then becomes a definitely more
> prominent feature of their personality. And then you kind of,
> you respect that in them and understand them better.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 4)

For Kathy, people's identities become more salient to her interactions once she becomes acquainted with them. She noted that as she gets to know a person better, they begin exploring each other's backgrounds and identities. Still, she emphasized that even when she is aware of a person's particular identities, it is important to look at the whole person and not just to see someone as, for example, a White friend.

During her freshman year of college, Kathy became aware of the importance of avoiding the assumption that one person can fully understand another person's perspectives. She recognized that each individual's identities shape his or her perspectives and experiences. Kathy noted that since she came to college she learned to recognize that people's differences do impact their understandings of the world:

> You start to realize, you know, there are so many differences between people, like, you know, economically, culturally, and, like, educationally,. . . And it's really hard, I think, when talking to people to realize that not everyone sees the things, things the same way you do. . . I think it's really hard sometimes to understand what they're saying because. . . you've never gone through what they've gone through. . .But then even if it were, I think even if it were the exact experience, like the same situation, the two feelings, two emotions out of that would be completely different.
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 9-10)

Since coming to college, Kathy learned that even when two people have the same experience, their differences shade how they understand that experience.

Particular Identity

As Kathy discussed her own identity orientation, she noted that is challenging to analyze one's own awareness of identity issues. For example, although she characterized herself as color or identity blind when she initially meets another person, she also realized that she is not blind certain identities, such as visible disabilities:

> Oh, I was just saying, initially I see myself as being color blind . . .OK, maybe not, I just realized not with disabled people.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 9)

Kathy noted that she is conscious of a person's disabilities. For example, she said she sees a person in a wheelchair as "someone in a wheelchair" (Focus Group Transcript, p. 4).

Initially, in discussing her awareness of people's disabilities, Kathy did not consider invisible disabilities. She first commented that she did not have any disabled friends. However, when the notion of invisible disabilities was raised, she realized that she did, in fact, have at least one disabled friend:

> . . .I don't have any friends that are disabled. . . That I know of. . . Oh, actually, no, I have one friend. . . Depression. . . .And I have one friend. . .she was diagnosed as being clinically depressed. Well, clinically, I don't know what, what the term is. But she was diagnosed with being depressed. . .It never really popped into my mind that it was a like a, like a illness. . .Versus, "Oh, gosh. What's wrong with her?"
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 27-28)

In considering her awareness of disabilities, Kathy observed that she was more conscious of some identities than she was of others and that this consciousness might be affected by whether an identity was initially visible or invisible.

As a focus group discussion about consciousness of and blindness to varied identities progressed, Kathy added other insights about the notion of visible and invisible identities. She noted that invisible identities can complicate interpersonal interactions:

> Kathy: Because of all the invisible things you don't want to go into some, "OK, you know. Let me ask you all these questions." You know. "So, let's get to, I'm going to get to know you now. So, what religion are you? What da, da, da." You know. And that makes things so impersonal in a sense. And also very, you're like over-stepping your bounds.
> Mary: Intrusive.
> Kathy: Yeah.
> Ken: It's impractical too, I think.

> Kathy: Yeah. There's no way that these little invisible things are like on the outside going to just automatically pop out . . .
>
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 36-37)

Although Kathy recognized that identities impact interpersonal interactions, she also observed that she did not meet a person and ask them to immediately list their identities.

Since entering college, Kathy also became conscious of other potentially invisible identities. She became especially aware of economic class, sexual orientation, and religion. She indicated that her awareness of class and sexual orientation had been limited due to the relatively homogenous background from which she came:

> . . .that's (sexual orientation) like one of the things I'm more aware of here because as, where I came from . . . Like, I'd consider it kind of homophobic. . .I come here and realize. . . And also it's pretty secluded and isolated from the real world, whatever. But that like, you know, there are, you know, lesbians and gays. And I have to be aware that, you know, someone I meet might not be heterosexual.
>
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 26)

Opportunities to interact with a diverse group of students exposed Kathy to issues that she was not particularly aware of in high school. For example, she no longer assumed that everyone she met was heterosexual.

Her interactions with students from many different backgrounds helped Kathy become more conscious of certain identities. For instance, she developed a deeper understanding of class issues due to her interactions with people from a variety of economic classes:

> Class for me has been probably the biggest (invisible identity that she has become aware of since entering college). Because it's really difficult, like I know there are people out there who are much poorer and daily, you know, they they have a daily struggle to survive. But I've never like, you know, it's really difficult to see things that you've never, like you've never been a part of. . .And so like I met someone here whose family used to be on welfare. And I was just like, you know, it it's kind of hard to realize that that actually happens to people because you're not. . . Like I'm I come from a pretty, like a middle class yuppie suburbia area.
>
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 34)

Interacting with people from varied social identity groups helped Kathy develop a greater awareness of particular identities, including class. Kathy's interactions across difference allowed and encouraged her to explore identity issues that she had not previously considered in much depth.

Context

Although Kathy characterized herself as initially blind to most identities and then as increasingly conscious of identity as she gets to know a person, she also suggested that the context in which people interact impacts blindness to or consciousness of identity issues. Identity is more salient in some environments than in others, according to Kathy. She agreed with other students in a focus group discussion that in the context of the dormitory students are more likely to approach each other "just as people" without noting particular identities. However, some settings bring identity issues to the forefront:

Mary: It's just the context of where you're meeting. If like you're in a, say if you're in the {Asian student union} meeting. . .
Kathy: That's true.
Mary: . . .then you're going to be conscious of somebody who's not Asian.
Kathy: Yeah.
Mary: But if you're just meeting them in classes, and you feel a lot less conscious about it.
Kathy: Like the dorm situation, it's really different too.
Mary: Yeah.
Kathy: But I understand. . .{Asian student union}meeting if you notice like a White person there. And just like, Oh.
Mary: It would, it would definitely stick out in your mind.
Kathy: Yeah. Ah ha.
(Focus Group Transcript, pp. 1-2)

For Kathy, the salience of identity was amplified in situations where identity was in some way highlighted or emphasized, such as at a meeting of a racial or ethnic organization. Her blindness to or consciousness of identity issues was impacted by the context in which an interaction occurs.

Awareness Of Diversity Issues on Campus

Kathy's experiences in college furthered her cognizance of both the opportunities and challenges of interactions across difference. Due to the diversity of the student body, Kathy had opportunities to interact with a more diverse group of people than she did in her high school. She became more conscious of issues that she had little previous personal experience with, such as issues of class, sexual orientation, and disability. She engaged in discussions related to diversity issues and challenges with her friends, in structured forums in her dormitory, in her volunteer work with eighth-graders, and in the context of the cross-cultural program profiled in this study.

Kathy noted that she had become more aware of stereotypes since entering college. In particular, a dorm discussion about jokes perpetuating stereotypes sent out via electronic mail piqued her awareness of stereotypes. Friends pointed out the ways in which certain jokes are racist or sexist and offensive and helped Kathy become more aware of the ways in which derogatory stereotypes are perpetuated:

> Like the, the e-mail we got was a math test. I wasn't even laughing. I didn't even understand it. But it was like a math test for people in East LA. But I didn't know what East LA was. . .And it was like, "Jerome buys forty thousand, um, machine guns and gives half of them to his brother, Jemal, Jamal. And, you know, how many are left?" And I was like, you know, "How is this funny?" And then one of the, one of my friends from East LA was very offended by like the use of the names. . .that didn't even click inside my, you know, head until she pointed it out to me. So, that, that in a sense has been really helpful too. . . Just becoming more aware of stereotypes that are already, are being perpetuated by society.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 14)

Kathy realized her discussions with other students helped her become more aware of the ways in which stereotypes are perpetuated. This is one example of the varied ways in which Kathy took advantage of opportunities to interact with a diverse group of students

and was willing to learn from other students to deepen her own cross-cultural understanding. She found ways to further her own cross-cultural learning in her friendships, in her interactions in the dorm, and in her extracurricular activities. However, she also recognized that not all students on campus are cross-culturally sensitive, as illustrated by the student who sent the electronic message described above.

Summary

Although Kathy had a diverse group of friends in high school and had engaged in discussions related to diversity issues with those friends, she had not been particularly aware of a number of identity issues, including issues related to class, disability, sexual orientation, and invisible identities. When she entered college, her opportunities for interactions with diverse peers expanded. She was then challenged to consider issues she had not had much exposure to in high school.

During her first year of college, Kathy developed an increased awareness of the salience of identity in interactions across difference. Although she initially characterized herself as identity blind, she then observed that she is not exclusively identity blind. She recognized that she generally did not focus on most visible identities, other than some disabilities, when she first meets a person. However, as she becomes better acquainted with a person, she becomes more aware of his or her multiple identities. Her identity orientation was thus mediated both by particular identities, such as disability, and by her relationship with an individual as she moves from an initial meeting to becoming better acquainted with him or her.

Due to opportunities to expand her interactions across difference, Kathy noted that she had become more cognizant of invisible identities since entering college. She recognized the need to consider issues such as class, sexual orientation, and disability. However, Kathy also submitted that it can be complicated to learn about the range of a person's identities since people do not generally just list off their identities when they meet. In addition, she observed that particular situations highlight certain identities. For example, students pay less attention to particular identities in routine interactions within their dormitories than they do in situations such as the meeting of an ethnic student organization or a discussion of welfare, according to Kathy. Ultimately, however, she was cognizant that people's differences affect their experiences and understandings and was conscious of the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions.

One issue of note in considering Kathy's perspectives on identity is the complexity of her affiliation with other Asian American students. Kathy does not necessarily exemplify a "typical" Asian American college student, if there is such a thing. It is therefore important to consider Kathy's views as those of an individual student and not as necessarily representative of how Asian American students perceive interactions across difference.

Growing up, Kathy attended Chinese school on Saturdays from the time she was three or four and was part of a close-knit group of nine girls who also attended Chinese school. However, she commented that because she went to a predominately White private school and most of the other Chinese students went to public schools, she was not readily accepted in the broader Asian community.

Early in her freshman year of college, Kathy attended some events organized by Asian American student organizations (the Asian student union and the Chinese student club) on campus. However, she noted that she did not have sustained involvement with the campus Asian American ethnic organizations. In fact, she commented that she considered attending an event in the Asian community, such as a party given by an Asian American fraternity, putting herself in an uncomfortable situation. Nevertheless, she did participate in a volunteer project to work with local Asian American eight graders organized by the Asian community.

Kathy indicated that she was used to being around Asian friends with whom she was familiar and comfortable but was not necessarily used to being part of a broader Asian

community where she did not know people. Still, she referred to two people from her dorm as "in the Asian community. . .I'm part of" (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 16). Kathy's own sense of identity and community is thus complex. Although this study primarily focuses on how college students perceive the salience of identity interactions across difference rather than how students view their own individual identities, the issues Kathy faced in negotiating her identity as an Asian American may have impacted her views of identity issues.

Case Study -- Mary

Background

Mary was an eighteen-year-old White female who attended a predominately White public high school in the Northwest. She spent her high school years in a predominately White upper middle class neighborhood, and the student body of her school was "very homogenous" (Questionnaire). Nevertheless, Mary had a few friends from varied racial/ethnic groups in high school and frequently socialized with people from different groups despite only occasional cross-group interactions in her classes and extracurricular activities. During her freshman year of college, Mary had many friends from other racial/ethnic groups and frequently interacted with students from other social identity groups in social, residential, and extracurricular settings.

High School Experiences With Diversity

Mary indicated that she grew up in a very homogenous area. Although there were few non-White students in her high school, some of her closest friends were students of color. Students in her classes and extracurricular activities were mostly White, yet she frequently ate lunch with and socialized with non-White students. When asked about her experiences with diversity in high school Mary noted:

> . . .I didn't really have much experience at all (with diversity). I come from a really homogenous area. It's basically all White. . . .So, um, it's something I'm really new to. . .when I was looking at that (referring to survey questions about her interactions across difference in high school) I really had to think hard about if I'd had friends from other ethnic groups. . .And I realized that I had. But I hadn't realized it at the time. And I guess the main difference was, I mean, some of my closest friends are from other. . .ethnic groups, and they were maybe some of the few students at my high school that were . . . as part of an ethnic group, but they um, I would say maybe their ethnicity wasn't that um predominate in their lives. . .They didn't um maybe get involved um with ethnic activities . . .and things, part of a community because there really wasn't much of a community for them to. . .relate to there. So. Maybe race was less of an issue even if I was friends with. . . groups from other races.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 2)

Although Mary had been close friends with some of the few students of color in her high school, she observed that she had not been conscious of the diversity in her friendships. She noted this might have been because those students did not necessarily identify strongly with their race or ethnicity, so differences were not particularly highlighted.

Freshman Year Of College

Although Mary had some experience with interactions across difference prior to entering college, she had not previously encountered students from other social identity groups who strongly identified with those groups. Even though Mary was not used to

being in a diverse environment, she sought out opportunities to explore diversity early in her freshman year:

> . . .I guess that was the first thing I noticed about {the university} when I came here was how diverse it was. . . And um it was something that was uncomfortable for me at first because it was kind of out of my comfort zone. And so I kind of wanted to learn more about it, and kind of throw myself into it and learn how I could maybe become more comfortable with it.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 10)

Mary made efforts to become more comfortable in a diverse environment. She developed friendships with many students from varied social identity groups, frequently interacted with a diverse group of peers, and became involved with the Explorations program.

In addition, Mary's closest friend her freshman year was her African American roommate. Mary indicated that she attended events in the Black community because it was important to her roommate and because she wanted to understand more about her roommate's affiliation with the Black community on campus:

> Um my roommate's Black. . .it hasn't been any cause for stress or really misunderstanding. But I I realize that I need to learn that I can't understand really. . .I guess it started when I first came here. The first day I was here she wanted to go to a Black community meeting, and so she asked me if I would go with her because she didn't know anybody. And so I went with her. And that was the first time in my life that I'd been like the only White person. . .in a sea of other faces. . .And it was really scary for me. I felt really uncomfortable. And um we were kind of talking about it later, and I realized I didn't understand her need for an ethnic community. . .That's not something that's ever been an issue for me. . .Because I've never been in the minority, I guess. And, so, I didn't really understand that need of hers. But I've kind of learned that I need to, that I should just respect that and accept that I can't understand it because it's just not part of my experience at all.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Mary was willing to put herself in uncomfortable situations in order to further her own cross-cultural understanding and in order to better understand her roommate. She recognized that she could not fully understand some aspects of her roommate's experiences because she had never been in the minority herself.

When asked if she had experienced any life-changing events since entering college, Mary responded that her relationships had been life-changing:

> Like friendships that I've formed that have made me view almost everything in a different way. Or at least have kind of another perspective to see experiences through.
> (Group Activity Transcript, p. 8).

Mary not only interacted with a diverse group of peers, but also experienced changes in her views and perspectives due to those interactions.

Her own explorations of diversity issues inspired Mary to help other students further their own cross-cultural understandings. A class on the sociology of gender encouraged Mary to explore gender issues. She and several other women in her dorm then decided to organize a dorm program where women in the dorm would talk about their experiences as women. Mary's comments illustrate the varied ways she explored diversity in her friendships, her courses, and her extracurricular activities.

Self-Characterization Of Identity Orientation Relationship

Initially, when asked whether she considered herself to be identity blind or identity conscious when she meets people, Mary indicated she was color blind at first. She quickly added, however, that she did not think color blindness was the best way to interact with people:

> I'd say I'm, um, I think color blind. But I'd say it's probably important to not be color blind after you get to know them.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 2)

Mary noted that she believed people should not be blind to others' identities after getting to know each other. How well two people are acquainted, or their relationship, therefore impacts identity orientation, according to Mary.

In other discussions about interactions across difference, Mary reemphasized the importance of not being identity blind. She observed that because she had not had much experience with interactions across difference in high school, she had not been sure when to acknowledge that someone was of a different race, for example. However, since entering college Mary said she had learned, "that you shouldn't pretend like you don't notice that somebody's different from you" (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 11).

Mary developed an increased awareness of the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions during her first year of college. She noted that in high school she believed people should ignore their differences, but she had since realized the importance of recognizing people's differences:

> . . .at home. I was like, "Why can't we just, you know, ignore our differences and just recognize like a common humanity or something." And now I, I just realize that that is so not the right way to do things. . .because it's, I mean, it's almost an insult to people. . .because when you say, you know, we're all the same and I'm color blind, it's like, it's like not recognizing that being from different groups gives you a different perspective on things necessarily. It's like, it's like saying that you understand when there's no way that you can. . . So, that's something I've realized since I've been here.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 8)

Mary's comments illustrate the transformations she observed in her own identity orientation; at the end of her first year of college, she no longer believed, as she once did, that people should be attempt to blind to their differences when interacting.

Mary's own identity orientation was not static. It shifted over time as she learned more about diversity issues, and it also changed as her relationships with people developed. Mary recognized the variations in her identity orientation, and she commented on the subtleties of being aware of one's own identity orientation:

> I think it's interesting because I think maybe a lot of, um, our color consciousness is maybe something we're not conscious of.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 5)

Mary observed that people are not necessarily cognizant of their own identity orientation; that is, people may not be aware of their own consciousness of other people's identities in their interpersonal interactions.

Mary's descriptions of her interactions with her African American roommate, Allison, demonstrate the complex ways in which relationship, or how well she knows someone, impacted her blindness to and consciousness of identity. Mary thought of her roommate as her best friend and not as her African American friend. She emphasized that although she and her roommate talk about a variety of diversity issues, from race issues to

women's issues, and although she has learned a great deal about the Black community from her roommate, she did not want to approach her friendships as an "educational experience."

In addition, she commented that she did not want to make assumptions about the ways in which a person's identities shaped their experiences. For example, she noted that she did not want to automatically assume that because someone is Black and she is White they are "hugely different." Although Mary was notably conscious of the role race played in shaping one's experiences and perspectives, she still submitted that, ". . .I guess with my friendships I try to make them friendships. . .instead of like educational experiences" (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 6). Ultimately, Mary recognized the importance of being conscious of the salience of identity in her interpersonal interactions but did not want to classify or think of her friends based solely on their particular identities. Mary's relationship with a person therefore impacted how she viewed their identities.

Particular Identity

One cannot be blind to visible identities, according to Mary. Specifically, she noted that when two people meet, they see each other's physical characteristics. Mary suggested that people cannot be blind to those identities they actually see when interacting with others:

> Ken: . . . when you first meet someone you have so, so much to just, yeah, go by.
> Mary: It's all physical.
> Ken: . . .I mean, obviously when you meet someone you see them.
> Mary: Right.
> Ken: So, you can't be blind to them. . .
> Mary: Like you can't be color blind.
> Ken: Like color blind is like obviously you see, you see who they are.
> Mary: That's impossible.
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 23-24)

Whether a particular identity is visible or invisible affects whether one can be truly blind to that identity, according to Mary.

During her first year of college, Mary became more conscious of particular identities. For instance, she developed a greater awareness of issues related to sexual orientation:

> The homosexuality thing has really been like key for me. But I, that's because a friend of mine from home kind of came out of the closet this year. She's at a different school. But I've kind of been with her through the whole process like. And I've heard, you know, everything that she's been going through. And so kind of that whole thing about making assumptions about people, I've really learned not to do that. And, um, at at least in that arena, although I still really struggle with it a lot.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 28)

Mary noted that she was becoming more conscious of sexual orientation and was attempting not to make stereotypical assumptions about heterosexuality and homosexuality. She was mindful of her own struggle to more conscious of sexual orientation.

Another issue Mary became more mindful of was the impact gender may have on interpersonal interactions. In particular, a course on the sociology of gender encouraged Mary to become more conscious of gender issues. People often are not conscious of the assumptions they make about different identities, such as gender or race, according to Mary:

> And a lot of what we talked about in there (in the sociology of

> gender course) is how men and women interact differently. And how because we all have these underlying assumptions about how men and women interact, like when you meet a man and, say you're female, and you meet a man, you're going to approach him differently than you would approach a woman. . .And it's probably true and you don't notice it. And you don't even realize it. . . I mean, that can maybe apply race to. Is that you view they underlying assumptions that you're not even aware of, you're probably going to approach it in a different way.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 5)

Mary suggested that often people are not aware of the underlying assumptions that impact their interactions. In considering how consciousness of varied identities affects people's interpersonal interactions, she proposed that the extent to which people are aware of their own assumptions about a particular identity is likely to impact how they approach interacting with a person of that identity.

Context

For Mary, the context in which an interaction takes place affected whether she was identity blind or identity conscious. At one point, when asked whether she would characterized herself as identity blind or identity conscious, Mary responded:

> Mary: I think it really depends on the context. It's just the context of where you're meeting. If like you're in a, say if you're in the {Asian student union} meeting. . .
> Kathy: That's true.
> Mary: . . .then you're going to be conscious of somebody who's not Asian.
> Kathy: Yeah.
> Mary: But if you're just meeting them in classes, and you feel a lot less conscious about it.
> Kathy: Like the dorm situation, it's really different too.
> Mary: Yeah.
> Kathy: But I understand. . .{Asian student union}meeting if you notice like a White person there. And just like, Oh.
> Mary: It would, it would definitely stick out in your mind.
> Kathy: Yeah. Ah ha.
> (Focus Group Transcript, pp. 1-2)

Mary suggested that she would be less conscious of identity issues when meeting other students in classes than she would be at a meeting of a racial or ethnic student organization. The context in which people meet and interact thus impacts how conscious of identity they may be, according to Mary. Some situations, such as Asian student union meeting, bring particular identities, in this case, race or ethnicity, to the forefront.

Awareness Of Diversity Issues on Campus

As a freshman in college, Mary learned a great deal about diversity . As she noted, she had not encountered many of the complexities of interactions across difference during her high school years. Although she was not necessarily comfortable in her diversity explorations at first, she nevertheless chose to pursue experiences and interactions that ultimately furthered her own cross-cultural understanding. For example, she decided to become involved in the Explorations program profiled and also attended a number of events in the Black community with her roommate.

Mary pursued discussions about difference and diversity issues with her roommate, with peers from the Explorations program, and with other students in her dorm.

Spontaneous discussions in the dorm hallway were common, she noted. During one such discussion, she and some of the other program students in her dorm talked about how ethnicity shaped their perspectives. Mary also mentioned talking about a wide range of identity issues including race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

During her first year of college, Mary commented that she sought opportunities to explore diversity and to further her own cross-cultural understanding. For Mary, one of the advantages of interacting with a diverse group of peers was the opportunity to quiet one's assumptions and stereotypes:

> I think, I think the more you interact with people from different groups, the more those little voices that Ken was talking about (the assumptions people carry in their minds about others based on stereotypes), you know, all these like stereotypes, they start getting quieter and quieter. . . Because you meet so many people that don't fit into those at all. And, so, pretty soon it's like. . .they don't have any significance any more. And, so, to me at least I've noticed that those voices have gotten a lot quieter.
> (Focus Group Transcript, p. 8)

In interacting with peers from varied social identity groups, Mary met people who did not fit stereotypes. She observed that interactions across difference thus helped her quiet the stereotypes she previously held. Mary was willing to learn from her interactions across difference. She noted that consequently her perceptions and views of a variety of identity issues changed.

Not all students, however, sought out interactions across difference, according to Mary. She suggested that some students associated with others like themselves because it was comfortable and safe. Although Mary suggested that overall most students tried to sensitive to multicultural issues, some students did not display cross-cultural sensitivity:

> There are a few people that aren't even worth discussing. That make me really angry. But um, that I think don't even try to be sensitive or aware. And that's just, you're going to find that any where.
> (Individual Interview Transcript, p. 15)

Mary noted that any place, even on a campus with a diverse student body, there would be some people who would not attempt to be aware of or sensitive to diversity issues.

Particular examples Mary described also demonstrated lack of cross-cultural sensitivity on the part of some students on campus. She described a student in her dorm from a family with a great deal of money who was not aware of how talking about the material things she had and the many places she went alienated her from students who may not have had as much money. Mary also talked about a student who did not realize her own limitations in discussing race issues as she kept emphasizing that everyone is the same. In contrast, Mary recognized that there are challenges and complexities related to interactions across difference. She tried to both further her own cross-cultural understanding and to recognize the limits to her understanding.

Summary

Mary had friends from varied social identity groups in high school and also frequently socialized with a diverse group of peers. However, she observed that she did not carefully consider the complexities of interactions across difference until she was exposed to a broad range of diversity issues and challenges during her freshman year of college. Upon entering college, Mary willingly put herself in uncomfortable situations in order to further her own cross-cultural understanding. She attended a number of events in the Black community on campus with her African American roommate and pursued discussions related to diversity issues with her roommate, students in her dorm, and other peers. In addition, Mary became involved in the Explorations program because she noticed

the diversity of the student body on campus, realized that she was initially uncomfortable with that diversity, and wanted to learn more in order to increase her comfort level.

At one point, Mary characterized herself as initially color (identity) blind when she meets a person and then as more conscious of identity once she gets to know him or her. Her relationship with a person thus affected her consciousness of their identities. Overall, as illustrated by excerpts from her comments, Mary was conscious of the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions. This consciousness was mediated by a number of factors including how well she knows a person, a person's particular identities, and the context in which an interaction occurs. For instance, it is impossible to be completely blind to visible identities, according to Mary. Yet, she observed that one may not be always be cognizant of her own identity consciousness. The more she talked about identity issues, however, the more subtleties of interactions across difference she identified.

In Mary's experience, one person's consciousness of another person's identities was also influenced by the context in which they interact. Therefore, she may have been more conscious of particular identities in certain contexts regardless of how well she knew a person. For example, Mary recognized that her Whiteness and her roommate's Blackness were amplified when they attended a welcoming event for Black students during college orientation. In contrast, when interacting with her roommate in the context of their dorm room, Mary acknowledged that their different races impacted their views and understandings yet suggested that she was also less overtly conscious of their different races.

Explorations of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation were all part of Mary's experiences as a college freshman. She thus explored multiple facets of identity. She did not let her initial discomfort with diversity prevent her from pursuing interactions across difference. Instead, she challenged herself to broaden her cross-cultural experiences and understandings. As she explored diversity, Mary developed an increased awareness of the salience of identity in interactions across difference.

Findings

This study was designed to explore college students' perceptions of interactions across difference by asking participants in the Explorations program to describe and interpret their experiences with cross-group interactions. Central themes related to participants' perceptions of interactions across difference were illuminated through case studies of three students, Ken, Kathy, and Mary.

During the course of my fieldwork, as I listened to and observed participants in the Explorations program and exchanged ideas with the program director, Tim, I began to develop the notion of identity orientation as a way to frame some my interpretations of program participants' interactions across difference. Increasingly, I came to recognize the complex nature of these students' notions about identity. By asking Ken, Kathy, and Mary to describe and characterize their own identity orientations in a focus group discussion, I was able to learn more about the complexities of their perspectives on identity issues in their interactions.

The excerpts and analysis of comments by all three students profiled demonstrate their cognizance of the role identity plays in interpersonal interactions and illuminate a number of important nuances in the impact of identity has on interactions. These students suggested that people's multiple identities shape their perceptions and experiences, thus heeding Burbules and Rice's (1991) and Delpit's (1988) proposition that we need to acknowledge the impact of multiple not just singular identities. In addition, their own descriptions of how they were both blind to and conscious of identity in their interactions illustrates the notion that these students may not have a singular perception of identity in all of their interactions.

Although the students profiled in the case studies did demonstrate their cognizance of many complexities involved in interactions across difference, there were some challenges they did not address in their descriptions and interpretations of their own

interactions. For example, none of these students talked explicitly about the power differentials that can affect interactions (Delpit, 1988; Tatum, 1992). This may be because none of them were from particularly marginalized identity groups, and all of them seemed to be active participants in what Delpit (1988) called the "culture of power." The culture of power, as defined by Delpit (1988), refers to the predominately White American "mainstream" culture that generally frames the rules or codes used in many American institutions, including schools. Although Ken's Jewish identity and Kathy's Asian American identity may have been mediating factors in their interactions, neither of them described experiencing routine marginalization or exclusion due to their identities. Thus, as Delpit (1988) noted, it may be that because Ken, Kathy, and Mary were largely participants in the culture of power, they were not especially aware of its existence. Although these students did not deny the existence of racism or even deny their own personal prejudices (Tatum, 1992), neither did they acknowledge considering the ways in which issues of power might impact their interactions across difference. Even cross-culturally sensitive students, such as Ken, Kathy, and Mary, may not be mindful of all of the complexities and challenges of cross-cultural interactions.

Although Ken, Kathy, and Mary's self-reports of their perspectives on interactions across difference made it clear that there were some issues, such as power differentials, they did not address, their descriptions revealed a number of important factors mediating their consciousness of identity issues. From the analysis of field notes, questionnaire responses, and individual interview, focus group, and group activity transcripts, three factors in particular emerged as critical elements affecting these undergraduates' cross-cultural interactions. The students profiled in the case studies all described the ways in which 1) relationship, 2) particular identity, and 3) context impacted their interactions across difference.

The first factor shaping these students' interactions across difference is the nature of the relationship between the individuals interacting. Relationship refers to how well one person knows another and how long one person has known another. Ken, Kathy, and Mary all identified a shift in their consciousness of others' identities as they progressed from initially meeting people to becoming better acquainted with them.

None of these students described themselves as either exclusively blind to or conscious of identity in their interactions. For example, Ken characterized himself as initially identity conscious when he first met a person. Then, as he got to know someone better, he saw them more as a "whole person" and became less conscious of particular identities. In contrast, Kathy described herself as initially blind to most identities but then as increasingly aware of a people's identities as she became better acquainted with them. Finally, as Mary discussed her awareness of others' identities, she noted a shift in her consciousness of identity since entering college. She initially characterized herself as identity blind, yet, at the same time, emphasized the importance of not being blind to others' identities. Previously, in high school, Mary largely ignored people's differences. Then, during her first year of college, she developed an increased consciousness of others' identities as she came to believe that it is important to recognize people's differences.

Recent works on cross-cultural interactions have suggested that color (or identity) blindness is not an effective approach to interactions across difference (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Schofield, 1995). In light of such frameworks, these students' descriptions of their own blindness to identity could be considered enigmatic. However, none of them was consistently unaware of or inattentive to the salience of identity in their interactions. Rather, their consciousness of identity issues varied. Nevertheless, the issue of being blind to identity is perhaps perplexing in the case of Kathy. She is the only one of the three students who maintained that she was blind to at least some identities when she first met a person. Although Mary also initially labeled herself as color or identity blind, as she described her interactions, it became clear that she was, in fact, not blind to identity issues. She noted that since entering college she realized ignoring difference is "not the right way to do things" (Mary's Individual Interview

Transcript). None of these students invariably refused to acknowledge difference and none consistently maintained an identity blind approach in all of their interactions.

Although Ken, Kathy, and Mary all displayed variations in their consciousness of identity as their relationship with another person developed, ultimately, all three recognized that people's multiple identities impact their interactions. In particular, they each talked about their own realization that people's differences affect their understandings, perceptions, and experiences. These students then reaped one of the benefits of dialogue across difference proposed by Burbules and Rice (1991) -- they broadened their understandings of others by recognizing that "the 'same' thing might look and feel quite different to members of different. . .groups" (Burbules and Rice, 1991, p. 405). Ken, Kathy, and Mary also explicitly identified potential challenges of dialogue across difference stemming from people's varied perceptions and experiences (Burbules and Rice, 1991). Therefore, for all of these students, at some point in their relationships with others it was essential to be conscious of people's different identities and to be aware of how those identities impact people's understandings and experiences.

Particular identities are a second factor influencing these students' approaches to interactions with people different from themselves. Ken, Kathy, and Mary all suggested that they may be blind to some identities and conscious of others. For example, Kathy described herself as blind to race in her initial interactions with people, yet noted that she is initially conscious of people's visible disabilities. Ken, on the other hand, asserted that it is impossible to be completely blind to visible identities, yet he also recognized that not all identities are visible. Mary agreed that one cannot be blind to the identities she actually sees when interacting with others. This supports the assertion that color blindness is a flawed notion (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1991; Schofield, 1995) because, as Ken and Mary observed, it is literally impossible to truly blind to another person's visible identities.

These students all agreed that it is important not to be intrusive in learning about another person's identities. They noted that one cannot initially discern all of another person's multiple identities and cannot immediately know all the ways in which particular identities are more or less salient to an individual. To be identity conscious then involves awareness of the salience of multiple identities in interpersonal interactions without making assumptions about how important particular identities may be to an individual.

The observations these students made suggest that although we cannot know all of a person's identities when we meet them, we can seek to avoid assumptions in three ways. First, do not assume that all identities are visible; realize that some identities are invisible. Second, recognize that we cannot necessarily know in what ways a particular identity is salient for an individual. Third, attempt not to make assumptions about a person's identities -- that is, try to not assume whether an individual is heterosexual or homosexual, disabled or not, Christian or Muslim, etc. For example, both Mary and Kathy said that during their first year of college they strove not to automatically assume that another person was heterosexual. These students' observations support Delpit's (1991) notion that in interactions across difference we need to consider the varied identities that might affect communication within a particular encounter.

Ken, Kathy, and Mary all became more aware of particular identities, including invisible identities, sexual orientation, disability, class, and religion, during their first year of college. In addition, they all noted that opportunities to interact with a diverse group of students increased their awareness of identity issues. The experiences of these students provides evidence for Stephan and Stephan's (1985) theory that implies knowledge of and contact with members of other social identity groups improves understanding of diverse social identities. As Ken, Kathy, and Mary had opportunities to interact with and learn more about students from different social identity groups, their awareness of the complex ways multiple identities are salient in interpersonal interactions increased.

Finally, the context in which these students interact with others was a key factor impacting their cross-group interactions. Context plays a role in influencing one person's

cognizance of another's identities. For instance, when describing casual daily interactions in their dormitories, Ken, Kathy, and Mary all said they largely interact without emphasizing particular identities. That is, in the course of routine activities such as brushing their teeth, these students do not pay particular attention to issues such as the race, sexual orientation, or religion of the person at the sink next to them. However, there are contexts in which certain identities becomes more prominent. Race, for example, is likely to becomes more significant in a discussion on inter-racial dating than in a casual conversation in the hall of a dormitory.

Ken also noted an additional nuance -- the context in which people interact may influence how much they either reveal about their own identities or are able to determine about other people's identities. Ken is not particularly religious, yet his Jewish identity is important to him. Other students may not realize he is Jewish until perhaps they notice him observing a Jewish holiday or hear him claim his Jewish identity when someone makes an anti-Semitic comment in front of him. This exemplifies the notion that there are some contexts in which people are more cognizant of their own or others' identities.

According to these students, there is a critical distinction between completely ignoring the import of identity versus de-emphasizing a particular identity as prominent in a certain context. This distinction lies in the difference between ignoring the notion that identity shapes our experiences and perceptions versus noting that in spite of our differences we do not need to always interact with each other solely as members of particular social identity groups (e.g., Black people or White people, women or men). The salience of identity is thus amplified in some situations and de-emphasized in others.

Ken, Kathy, and Mary described the ways in which the Explorations program furthered their cognizance of the salience of identity in cross-group interactions and promoted positive perspectives of such interactions. Allport (1954) and others after him (Burbules and Rice, 1991; Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994; Scott and Damico, 1982; Stephan and Stephan, 1985; Tatum, 1992) suggested that positive intergroup contact does not automatically occur when diverse people interact. Instead, certain conditions -- equal status, cooperation, understanding, support from those in positions of authority -- proposed by Allport (1954) and supported by later studies (Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994; Scott and Damico, 1982; Stephan and Stephan, 1985; Tatum, 1992) have been shown to improve interactions across difference. The Explorations program goals acknowledged the need to provide a framework to foster positive cross-group interactions and met those conditions:

> Students will not attain the full benefits of diversity by merely co-existing in a pluralistic environment. Interaction, engagement, dialogue and other opportunities for mutual enhancement must exist in and outside the classroom to nourish and to maximize the intellectual and social development of students. . .Creative, institutionally sponsored interventions are necessary to enhance cross cultural interaction, dialogue, and learning.
> (Program Materials, 1996)

Participants in the Explorations program were not left to experience and learn about diversity on their own. Instead, the program provided a theoretically sound framework for encouraging interactions across difference and facilitating discussion and processing of challenges encountered in those interactions.

The case study students, Ken, Kathy, and Mary, did not exhibit the resistance to exploring diversity issues described by Tatum (1992). None of these students described approaching race as a taboo topic for discussion, portraying the United States as a just society, or denying personal prejudice -- the three major sources of resistance to learning about and discussing oppressed-related issues proposed by Tatum (1992). The Explorations program seems to have been successful in helping these students address and process their emotional responses to exploring diversity. The program was designed to facilitate students' intellectual, emotional, and personal explorations of diversity and interactions across difference (Program Materials, 1994). According to the students' descriptions of the program, it was successful both in encouraging them to

consider, discuss, and experience diversity and in helping them process their emotional responses to their diversity explorations.

Although Ken, Kathy, and Mary all explored diversity both within and outside the bounds of the program, Explorations provided opportunities for them to further their intellectual, interpersonal, and emotional understandings of their diverse interactions. Their consciousness of the salience of identity in interpersonal interactions was nurtured, supported, and developed by the program. They talked about how the program encouraged participants to put themselves in potentially uncomfortable situations in which they encountered the challenges of interactions across difference, then helped them examine why they felt uncomfortable and perhaps move beyond that discomfort. In describing the ways in which Explorations impacted their interactions across difference, these students made comments such as, ". . .I think it's (the Explorations program) given me some kind of subtle understandings. . . like little nuance things about relating to people" (Mary's Individual Interview Transcript, p. 18). Although Ken, Kathy, Mary and other participants in Explorations became involved in the program due to their own interest in exploring diversity, they indicated that the program encouraged them to experience, think about, and approach interactions across difference in ways they might not have otherwise. In particular, the program fostered the development of these participants' consciousness of the ways in which multiple identities people's impact interpersonal interactions.

Because I did not have the opportunity to profile participants in this study at the beginning of their first year of college prior to their participation in the Explorations program, it was necessary to rely on their self-reports of they ways in which the program impacted their explorations of diversity. It is possible that these same students may have pursued similar diversity explorations even without the program and may have found avenues for processing the challenges they encountered in the course of those explorations. Nevertheless, their self-reports indicate that the program did impact their perspectives on and experiences with interactions across difference.

According to their self-reports, the Explorations program was useful in promoting understanding and explorations of interactions across difference for the students profiled. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine if such a program would have a similar impact on other types of students, particularly those from more marginalized groups. The Explorations program appeared to meet its goals of promoting cross-cultural interactions and understandings for students who seemed generally to be participants in the culture of power.

Yet, it is important to remember what Duster (1993) described as the "polymorphous" nature of cross-cultural interactions as students from varied identity groups have different approaches to exploring diversity. Therefore, students of varied identities are likely to have different needs as they negotiate diverse interactions. In its design, the Explorations program was intended to meet the needs of students from many different identity groups as they negotiated diversity. Students from varied groups, including African American students, Latino/a students, bi-racial students, disabled students, did participate in the program. Therefore, it would be useful to examine such students' experiences with Explorations to learn more about how the program addresses the needs of students from a broader range of identity groups.

This study largely focused on participants' descriptions of how they view other people's identities in their interpersonal interactions rather than on their perspectives of their own identities. Thus, the focus was primarily limited to examining the external dimensions of identity in terms of identities these students attributed to others. A future study might also examine the internal dimensions of identity by looking at how identities individuals claim impact their interactions. The multiple identities individuals claim might also be impacted by the three factors explicated above, relationship, particular identity, and context. In addition, due to time constraints, this study relied primarily on students' descriptions of their interactions and perspectives and was constrained by limited observations of the students' actual interactions. It would be valuable to observe how students' descriptions of their approach to interactions across difference are played out in their daily lives.

Implications

As college campus communities in the United States are comprised of increasingly diverse student populations, it becomes essential for students to develop the awareness and understanding needed to interact with those different from themselves. Numerical diversity has increased on many campuses (Bunzel, 1992; Duster, 1993), yet increases in the numbers of diverse students has not necessarily led to positive cross-group interactions (Hurtado, 1992). As the Explorations program coordinator noted in a profile of the program, it is time to move college campuses "'beyond the first generation challenge of increasing numerical diversity on our campus(es) to the second generation challenge of capturing the promise of that diversity to enrich the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the institution(s)'" (Program Materials, 1996). It is this second generation challenge of diversity that Explorations and programs like it on campuses across the country are designed to address. From Schoem's (1990) seminar on Blacks and Jews: Dialogue on Ethnic Identity Issues to Tatum's (1992) Psychology of Racism Course, educators on many college campuses are implementing interventions intended to promote positive interactions across difference for a diverse range of students.

The Explorations program is based on the conception, supported by multiple studies (Allport, 1954; Burbules and Rice, 1991; Hurtado, Dey, Treviño, 1994; Scott and Damico, 1982; Stephan and Stephan, 1985; Tatum, 1992), that students need to be guided in their explorations of diversity in order to promote positive experiences with interactions across difference and in order to foster the development of cross-cultural understanding. After working with the Explorations for two years, Tim, the program coordinator affirmed the need for such programs:

> The {Explorations} program assumes that students enter {the university} welcoming diversity, but they soon encounter discomfort that inhibits their curiosity . . .a permanent retreat leads to each spending an educational career "untouched" by the diversity that surrounds them. Collectively, students in retreat from each other weaken the fabric of a campus community and subvert the benefits of diversity. Unless students are helped to overcome the discomfort they encounter and to persist in learning more about the diversity that exits , they will miss critical opportunities for developing their capacity to live, to learn, and to lead effectively in the world they will be shaping.
> (Program Materials, 1996).

In Tim's experience, first year students he works with generally enter college open to exploring diversity. Yet, too many students leave the university some four years later relatively untouched by diversity. The notion of students "untouched" by diversity was one I proposed in a conversation with Tim. It was based on my own observations of students who attended college amidst diverse peers yet did not develop their own cross-cultural understandings and did not seem to recognize or acknowledge the salience of diverse identities in their interactions. The idea of students' retreating from exploring diversity is supported by Tatum's (1992) findings that when students' emotional responses to diversity are not addressed, they retreat and resist learning about issues related to diversity and oppression. If students are going to live in diverse campus communities and in a diverse society, they need to learn to overcome discomfort and persist in pursuing cross-cultural understanding in order to interact positively and constructively with individuals from varied social identity groups.

Currently, there is a relative paucity of knowledge regarding how members of campus communities might go about shaping their communities in order to better facilitate positive interactions among college students with diverse identities, backgrounds, attitudes, and values. This study utilized case studies to explore the attitudes of undergraduate participants about issues of diversity. The case study students' awareness of the salience of identity in interactions across difference was a particularly striking aspect of their

approaches to interactions across difference. However, their consciousness of identity was not constant in all of their interactions. Instead, the case studies demonstrated the variable nature of identity consciousness and highlighted factors impacting these students' conscious of or blindness to identity issues. Overall, color blindness was found to be an ineffective approach to interactions across difference for these students. Diversity on college campuses ranges far beyond mere differences in color or race and includes a range of identities. Furthermore, study participants suggested that ignoring differences is not a constructive way to negotiate cross-cultural interactions.

Given the importance of acknowledging varied identities, an individual's view of the salience of identity in interactions across difference is a crucial element of fostering positive cross-group dialogue and interactions. The exploration of students' consciousness of others' identities is one way to learn how these college students view difference in their interactions. By better understanding their views we can learn to foster improved communication. Learning about the experiences and perspectives of the undergraduates profiled may help post-secondary educators address the complex task of identifying factors that help college students develop, sustain, and deepen cross-cultural relationships.

Due to the voluntary nature of student participation in the Explorations program, the question of how we can further the cross-cultural understanding of students who do not choose to participate in such programs arises. Participants in programs like Explorations can be empowered as change agents and role models. One of the case study students noted the "rippling" effect she observed as Explorations students interacted with peers outside the program. Tatum's (1992) study also found a rippling effect as students "take their friends with them" in their explorations of diversity (Tatum, 1992, p. 22). As students who have engaged in programs like Explorations interact and dialogue with peers in their dorms, classes, social lives, work, and extracurricular activities, they may share and model their cross-cultural sensitivity. In addition, students who develop a heightened awareness of diversity issues can help create a campus climate that promotes positive interactions across difference (Tatum, 1992). Therefore, it is not only students who participate in programs like Explorations who may be potentially "touched" by an increased awareness of and sensitivity to the challenges and rewards of interactions across difference; such students may in turn "touch" their peers.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender (please circle one): Male Female

Age: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Religious Affiliation/Identification: _____

Racial/Ethnic Identification (please circle one):

-African American/Black
-Arab American
-Asian American/Pacific Islander
-European American/White
-Biracial/Multiracial (specify): _____
-Latino(a)/Hispanic
-Native American/American Indian
-International Student (please specify ethnicity & country of origin):

_____
Ethnicity

_____
Country of Origin/Home or Passport Country

-Other (specify):_____

****IF YOU IDENTIFY AS BI-RACIAL OR MULTI-RACIAL, PLEASE RESPOND TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE FROM A DIFFERENT RACIAL OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND OR GROUP IN LIGHT OF WHAT YOU CONSIDER "DIFFERENT' FROM YOURSELF. THINK ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS IN TERMS OF WHEN YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE INTERACTING WITH SOMEONE FROM A DIFFERENT RACIAL OR ETHNIC IDENTITY FROM YOUR OWN. THINK ABOUT "DIFFERENT" AND ABOUT CROSSING RACIAL OR ETHNIC LINES IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE TO YOU.****

****

Some questions on this questionnaire were adapted from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's 1991 Follow-up Survey of 1987 Freshman and used with permission of The Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles.

HIGH SCHOOL INFORMATION

List the name of the TOWN or CITY, STATE, and COUNTRY (international students) where you graduated from high school:

_____ _____ _____
Town or City State Country

Please check one: ___ I graduated from a public high school.
___ I graduated from a private or parochial high school.

Briefly describe the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood where you lived during high school: (e.g. I grew up in predominately white university town with a large international student population, a significant number of Asian families, and only a few Black families).

_____
_____
_____
_____

Briefly describe the racial and ethnic composition of the high school from which you graduated: (e.g.. My high school was predominately white with some Asian students and a few Black students.).

_____
_____
_____
_____

Did you have friends from a different racial or ethnic group in high school? (circle one)
None One A few Many

Did you date in high school? (circle one) Yes No

If you did date in high school, how often did you date someone from a different racial or ethnic background? (circle one)
Never Occasionally Frequently Not applicable

How often during school did you eat lunch with someone from a different racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

Did you participate in extracurricular activities in high school? (circle one) Yes No

If you did participate in extracurricular activities in high school, list the 2 extracurricular activities in which you were most involved in high school & indicate your interactions with students from another racial or ethnic background in those activities.
1) ACTIVITY:_____
How often did you interact with people from a different racial or ethnic background in this activity?
Never Occasionally Frequently
2) ACTIVITY:_____
How often did you interact with people from a different racial or ethnic background in this activity?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often did you socialize after school or on weekends with someone from a different racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often did you have students from a different racial or ethnic background in your high school classes?
Never Occasionally Frequently

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INFORMATION ABOUT LIFE IN COLLEGE

Circle ONE answer for each of the following questions regarding your experiences in college.

Do you live in an ethnic theme house? (circle one) Yes No
If you do live in an ethnic theme house, did you request to live there? Yes No Not applicable

Do you have a roommate/roommates of another racial or ethnic background? Yes No

How frequently do you participate in or attend activities in your ethnic community on campus?
Never Occasionally Frequently Not applicable

How frequently do you participate in or attend activities in other ethnic communities on campus?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often do you interact with students in your residence from another racial or ethnic backgrounds?
Never Occasionally Frequently

In the context of dorm activities, how often do you interact with someone from another racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often do you eat meals with someone from another racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often do you socialize with students from another racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How often do you study with someone from another racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

In college, have you made any close friends from another racial or ethnic background?
None One A few Many

How often do you become romantically involved with or date someone from another racial or ethnic background?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How frequently have been in situations or settings this year on campus in which you were the minority?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How frequently have you chosen to be in situations or settings this year on campus in which you were the minority?
Never Occasionally Frequently

Are you involved in extracurricular activities on campus? Yes No
If you are involved in extracurricular activities, list the 2 extracurricular activities in which you are most involved and indicate frequency of your interactions with students from another racial or ethnic background in those activities.
1) ACTIVITY:_____
How often did you interact with people from a different racial or ethnic background in this activity?
Never Occasionally Frequently
2) ACTIVITY:_____
How often did you interact with people from a different racial or ethnic background in this activity?
Never Occasionally Frequently

Overall, how frequently do you think students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds interact on campus?
Never Occasionally Frequently

How would you characterize the level of racial conflict and tension among students on campus?
No tension/conflict Minimal tension/conflict Some tension/conflict High tension/conflict

Appendix B

Questionnaire Coding For Focus Group Students

	STUDENT 1 "Ken"	STUDENT 5 "Kathy"	STUDENT 8 "Mary"
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION			
GENDER	male	female	female
AGE	19	18	18
RELIG. AFFIL.	Jewish	"none-more Buddhist than anything else"	"raised Presbyterian but questioning"
RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION	European American/White	Asian American/Pacific Islander	EuropeanAmerican/ White (**crossed out Arab American)
HIGH SCHOOL INFORMATION			
1 Town	West Coast	Southwest	Northwest
2 School	public h.s.	private/parochial h.s.	public h.s.
3 Neighborhood	predom W neighbrhd, large pop of Jews	predom multicultural metropolitancity; predom W private h.s. & attended Chinese school on weekends; current neighbrhd predom W	predom W area upper middle class "very homogenous in my graduating class of 576, there were 2 blackstudents & maybe 25 Asians."
4 Student body	"diverse student body, but not large amt of interaction between groups"	"predom W w/ sm Asians, few Blk, very few Hispanic students"	"very homogenous in my graduating class of 576 there were 2 black students & maybe 25 Asians"
5 Friends HS	Many	Many	A few
6 Date HS	Yes	Yes	Yes
7 Who dated HS	Never	Never	Frequently
8 Lunch HS	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently
9 Extracur. HS	Yes	Yes	Yes
10A Activity HS	Student Government	Student Government	Choir
10B Interaction HS	Occasionally	Frequently	Never
11A Activity HS	Varsity Soccer	Volleyball	Leadership/ASB
11B Interaction HS	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally
12 Socialize HS	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently
13 Classes HS	Frequently * Though not large #	Frequently	Occasionally

HS = High School, U = University

Italicized items indicate words changed to protect anonymity

INFORMATION ABOUT LIFE AT COLLEGE

	STUDENT 1 "Ken"	STUDENT 5 "Kathy"	STUDENT 8 "Mary"
14 Theme House	No	No	No
15 Request Theme H.	(blank)	Not applicable	Not applicable
16 Roomate	Yes	Yes	Yes
17 Your community	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never
18 Other comm.	Occasionally	Never/Occasionally	Occasionally
19 Residence inter.	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
20 Dorm activities	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
21 Eat meal	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
22 Socialize	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
23 Study	Frequently	Occasionally	Frequently
24 Close friends U.	Many	A few	Many
25 Romance/date	Never *"I haven't but I'm definitely open to the idea."	Never	Never
26 In minority U.	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally
27 Chosen minority	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally
28 Extracurric. U.	Yes	Yes	Yes
29A Activity	*Peer Counseling Center Staff*	*Volunteer Project for Asian Middle School Youth*	*Environmental Education*
29B Interaction	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
30A Activity	Intercultural Club	Community Service-Hospital, Preschool Volunteer	Choir
30B Interaction	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
31 Overall interact.	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
32 Conflict/tension	"Low"	"don't know"	"I would say it's low but any amount that happens occurs because of misunderstanding & miscommunication, not a blatant lack of respect."

HS = High School, U = University

Italicized items indicate words changed to protect anonymity

Appendix C

Individual Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your experiences with diversity, crossing boundaries, interacting with people from different backgrounds prior to coming to {college}.
   -type of experience, frequency, depth

2) Are your interactions with people from different groups different than they were in high school?
   A) In what ways?
   B) Why, for what reason are you interactions {in college} different?

3) Where did you develop the value for or learn to value crossing boundaries?
   -Parents, church, school. . .

4) What does crossing boundaries mean to you; what is your personal definition of "crossing boundaries"?

5) What is your starting point when you meet someone different? How do you approach interacting with someone different?
   A) How do you feel?
   B) What is your comfort level?
   C) Do you initiate conversation?
   D) Has that changed this year? In what ways?

6) How do you negotiate cultural interactions? Do you accommodate, assimilate; do you adjust or does the other person adjust?

7) Do you have conversations about differences with other students?
   A) With whom, in what contexts

8) Has participating in the {Explorations} program impacted you interactions with people from other backgrounds?
   A) In what ways?
   B) Did it impact the frequency of your interactions with those who are different?
   C) Did it encourage you to attend events in other communities you might not have otherwise?
   D) Did your involvement in the program impact your comfort level in crossing boundaries? In what ways?

9) Tell me about a time {this year on campus} when you chose to put yourself in a situation where you were the minority?
   A) What was your comfort level?

10) How did you come to be involved in the {Explorations} program?
   A) What has kept you involved?
   B) Recommendations

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1) What is your starting point with people, are you color conscious or color blind
   A) Do you consciously or unconsciously practice color or identity blindness?
   B) How do you approach the dilemma of being color or identity blind versus color or identity conscious?
   C) What have you learned at {this university} about color/identity blindness and consciousness?
   D) What about being blind versus conscious of other identities
      -gender, class, sexual orientation, disability
      -others?

2) How do you define or characterize what it means to be color/identity blind?

3) How do you define or characterize what it means to be color/identity conscious?

4) What are the pros and cons of being color/identity conscious; color/identity blind?
   -pros of being color/identity blind
   -cons of being color/identity blind
   -pros of being color/identity conscious
   -cons of being color/identity conscious

5) How do you want other people to approach you or see you, blind to or conscious of your identities?
   A) What if people ignore that you are Asian or Jewish or female. . .?
   B) What identities are important to you?

6) How would you characterize students at {this university} in general, as color/identity blind or color/identity conscious?
   A) Do you feel a push or a trend towards one or the other (blindness or consciousness) here?